MEDITATIONS ON
ALMS . . . . .
NITENTIAL . .

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MEDITATIONS ON
PSALMS PENITENTIAL

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By the Author of "Meditations on the Psalms of the Little Office"

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'Tollite vobiscum verba, et convertimini ad Dominum.'

[illegible] CHRISTI REGIS S.J.
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PREFACE

THE seven songs called by the Church "the penitential psalms" have been the voice of her penance in every age.

From the wealth of her treasure in the Psalter she singles them out specially for use in her public Offices, and commends them for the private devotion of her faithful children. She appoints them to be sung at the Consecration of her Altars and Cemeteries; they accompany the public Excommunication and Reconciliation of her Penitents; a newly-elected Abbot receives her Benediction in the spirit of their humility. She weaves them into the framework of her Canonical Hours, orders them for the daily Lenten use of her Priests, and sanctions them for constant recitation by her Religious Orders.

But not only to the sons and daughters of the Church does the Psalter bear a message of consolation and hope. A tired generation, wandering bewildered through time's desert, fevered with the spirit of analysis, sick with disappointment as one

by one the mirages of its theories of life sink into sand and nothingness before its eyes, turns again and again by the sheer necessity of its being to slake its thirst at the waters of the ancient wells of Life, preserved undefiled through the ages by the guardianship of the Catholic Church.

Such deep and living wells are these psalms of penance. The profound spiritual experience which they reveal finds a response in the yearning of every unsatisfied heart; the assured faith of their inspired writer is a beacon-light to the perplexed and despondent. In them the true penitent has an inexhaustible fount of devotion; for the contrite soul can find no fitter words wherein to break silence and utter its lamentation before God.

In case these Meditations may be found useful in preparation for the Sacrament of Penance, there have been added also some thoughts on Psalm cxxxviii, which may serve as an introduction to Examination of Conscience, and on Psalm cii, as a thanksgiving after Absolution.

The Meditation on Psalm cxxix is reproduced and enlarged from the companion volume of Meditations on the Psalms of the Little Office.

As some expressions in the devotional commentary on the 'Miserere' will be

found to show a similarity to passages in Savonarola's Meditation on the same psalm, it should be stated that the MS. was in the hands of the Censor Deputatus before the publication of either of the recent editions of that Meditation, and that the author had had no access to Savonarola's works.

A new departure has been made in the present volume. It has been thought better, in view of the frequent recitation of the Penitential Psalms, to base the critical paraphrase primarily on the Vulgate text, and therefore to give the Douay translation of this text, rather than attempt a fresh rendering, as was done in the Meditations of the Psalms of the Little Office. They have also, by their nature and length, seemed to demand a fuller treatment than those of which the Little Office is composed.

This volume and its companion are offered in the hope that they may serve, in however small a degree, to deepen those dispositions of contrition, faith, and love wherein the sanctification of souls is perfected, and the Will of God increasingly accomplished.

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Meditations on Psalms Penitential

PSALM VI

O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, nor chastise me in Thy wrath.

[The chastisements of God have two ends—the satisfaction of His justice and the triumph of His love. The temporal discipline inflicted for the sin may remain the same in either case; e.g., where it brings its own consequences, God usually allows them to run their natural course. But the true nature of the punishment is conditioned by another factor — the human will. Prayer, the living channel whereby the Holy Ghost, in union with the converted will, reunites the sinner's heart with God, has power to change His wrathful judgments into fatherly correc-

1. Domine, ne in furore tuo arguas me, neque in ira tua corripias me.

tions, whereby both the perfect purposes of God's chastisements are accomplished. So the psalmist prays, "Chastise me; but as a father, not as a judge."]

2. Miserere mei, Domine, quoniam infirmus sum; sana me, Domine, quoniam conturbata sunt ossa mea.

Have mercy on me, O Lord [*al.*, be gracious unto me] for I am weak [*al.*, I languish, or, am withered away]; heal me, O Lord, for my [very] bones are troubled [*al.*, confounded or terrified].

3. Et anima mea turbata est valde; sed tu, Domine, usquequo?

My soul also is troubled exceedingly, but Thou, O Lord, how long? [i.e., wilt Thou leave me long in these straits?]

[The very frame-work of the being is unhinged, so that the whole man fails; the vital organs dependent on the supporting bony structure wither away, for their functions have failed; the soul dismayed, panic-stricken, paralysed, shares in the confusion. So desperate is the condition that it would be a mute appeal to the compassionate and speedy help of a humane fellow-creature; how much more to the Lord of love?]

Turn to me, O Lord [*al.*, return] and deliver my soul: O save me for Thy loving kindness' sake.

4. Convertere, Domine, et eripe animam meam; salvum me fac propter misericordiam tuam.

[The figure is of God having made as though He were absent or had turned His back in displeasure. The psalmist here changes his ground of appeal; from pleading his own misery, he goes on to urge the far more potent consideration, i.e., that God would vindicate His own Divine Character in its unquenchable Charity.]

For in death there is no one that is mindful of Thee [i.e., no remembrance of Thee] and in hell [i.e., in the under world] who will give Thee thanks?

5. Quoniam non est in morte qui memor sit tui; in inferno autem quis confitebitur tibi?

[I was created by Thee to praise Thee, to thank Thee, to glorify Thee in my being; deliver me while yet there is time, lest Thine honour suffer, one ray of Thy glory shine less bright.]

I have laboured in [*al.*, I am wearied out with] my groanings; every night I will wash my bed, and water my couch with my tears.

6. Laboravi in gemitu meo; lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum; lacrymis meis stratum meum rigabo.

7. Turbatus est a furore oculus meus; inveteravi inter omnes inimicos meos.

Mine eye is troubled [*al.*, is sunken in or wasted away] through indignation [*al.*, through grief or provocation]; I have grown old amongst [*al.*, because of] all my enemies.

[Apart from God, all is hopeless; he remains powerless to raise or help himself, and has further exhausted himself by restlessness and passionate protest; grief reigns supreme; to himself a misery, to his foes a laughing stock, he has grown old before his time.]

[But a noble transition follows. The sorrow which has now been consecrated by humble prayer brings forth its first-fruits. From the spirit of true penance spring up holy freedom, joy, and assurance of victory in the power of God.]

8. Discedite a me omnes qui operamini iniquitatem, quoniam exaudivit Dominus vocem fletus mei.

Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.

9. Exaudivit Dominus deprecationem meam; Dominus orationem meam suscepit.

The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord hath received [*al.*, will receive] my prayer.

Let all mine enemies be put to shame, and be sore troubled [*al.*, confounded]; let them be turned back, and put to shame very speedily.

[The more correct rendering of the verse is probably in the future tense, i.e., all mine enemies shall be ashamed and sore dismayed; they shall turn backward and be put to shame in a swift and sudden flight.]

10. Erubescant, et conturbentur vehementer omnes inimici mei; convertantur et erubescant valde velociter.

A PSALM of penance, but also a song of praise, since praise must ever be the counterpart of true penance; the expression of a faith assured and even triumphant in the midst of darkness and depression, both physical and mental. The soul has sinned; it is acutely conscious of having merited the displeasure of God, and realises His chastisement in the suffering resulting from the sin. This chastisement appears to be of two kinds, i.e., physical misery and external cruelty; the first perhaps produced and certainly aggravated by the second. The psalm is the expression of thankful belief in the efficacy of prayer; in its power not only to soothe and calm, but to bring forth joy and glorious victory, where without it all would have been ruin, despair and death.

Point 1. God, beholding a soul that stands in need of chastisement, reveals Himself in the severity of love. The unfaithful soul therefore fears Him as the just Judge, the Rebuker of sin, the Avenger of His own insulted Majesty, before Whose wrath it quails in the consciousness of its human misery and corruption.

v. 1. O God, whither shall I flee? What shall become of me? For Thou art angry and full of wrath; Thine indignation lieth hard upon me; Thy rebuke hath terrified me.

v. 6, 7. I am full of disorder, of confusions, of darkness; and because of my sin Thou hast suffered all this to come upon me.

v. 2. O Lord, I am weak; for I have chosen

Luke xv. my own substance and husks, instead of Thee, Who alone canst satisfy. No longer will my bones support me, for I have trusted in my own strength, and behold, I am become feeble as a babe that cannot refuse the evil or choose the good.

v. 6. I am wearied out with my restlessness, my bitter discontent, my self-introspection,

v. 7. my remorse. So long have I dwelt within the darkness of my own heart that mine eye is wasted away, even as the eyes of the

Bar. iii, 10ff. creatures in the deep sea-caves; for I have forsaken the Fountain of Wisdom and the way of God, where is the light of the eyes and peace. I lie on the bed of weakness, paralysed by evil habit, with tears deploring it; yet I cannot lift myself up nor arise from it. My evil ways rise up before me and

mock me; my enthusiasms have departed, my ideals are dead; I have grown old and lifeless of heart, because I have not hoped in Thee, the Renewer of youth. Isai. xl. 31. Ps. ciii. 5.

O unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom. vii. 24.

Point 2. The humbled and humble soul, wholly surrendered to the Divine discipline, discerns in that very discipline her acceptance with God. She realises that God's relation to her has never altered, that He loves her, and has never ceased to love; and that the changed aspect in which He has appeared to her vision is the result of sin, the distorted vision of one who has lost the single eye. She discerns that His dealings are not as with servants but as with sons, through Jesus Christ the First-born among many brethren; that because through the Sacrifice of the Cross justice has been satisfied, God can correct with judgment; because Jesus Christ shares her chastisement, she is made partaker of His merits; that she is not left unpunished because she is not cut off from God. Jer. x. 24

O God, rebuke me not, yet rebuke me; not in Thine anger, lest I perish at the blast of the spirit of Thy wrath; but in love, for I am Thy servant, whom Thou wilt save from afar. Spare me not, for I am not innocent, but rebuke me that I may return to Thy bosom and be at rest. I have sinned against heaven and before Thee; I am not worthy to be called Thy son; make me as one of Thy hired servants. v. 1. Ps. xvii. 16. Jer. xlvi. 27, 28. Luke xv. 18, 19.

Yet am I still Thy son; the tie is not
Heb. xii, 6, 7. yet broken; therefore leave me not unpunished, but chastise me and scourge me; for if I am both Thy servant and Thy son, I shall not be far from Thee, nor fear nor be dismayed at Thy chastisements.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who for us hast suffered, taught by Thy psalmist, Thy seer, I will ask of Thee five things.

By Thy weakness through the outpouring of Thy precious Blood, by the ebbing of Thy Life, by Thy faintness in approaching
v. 2. Death, have mercy upon me, for I am weak; weak through self-restraint lost, through opportunities wasted, through strength dissipated in innumerable follies, through failing hope, through fear of evil to come.

Matt. xxvi, 38. By the unspeakable anguish of Thy Soul in the thick darkness of Gethsemani, by the racking pains of the Cross, by the straining of each sacred Joint and Sinew,
v. 2. by the numbering of Thy Bones, heal me, for my bones are vexed, and my soul is troubled exceedingly. For my natural strength has failed, and I have not trusted in Thee, nor am I stablished in faith. I have tried to be sufficient unto myself; my will is corrupted and weakened by evil desire; I am at the mercy of every unstable impulse. O Lord heal me, and I shall be healed; knit my will to Thine, that my weakness may become Thy power.

By Thy mysterious desolation upon the Cross, and by the hiding of Thy Father's
v. 4. Luke xv, 20*ff.* Face, turn Thee, meet me while I am yet

a great way off, fold me in Thine embrace; take me back into my Father's house; give me the childlike heart of humility, though I have lost the child's heart of innocence.

By Thy betrayal into the hands of Thine enemies when they closed round Thee and in cruel triumph hurried Thee to judgment, when as a meek Lamb Thou wast led to the slaughter and there was none to deliver Thee, deliver me from my bitter enemies; v. 4.
from the guilt of sin, from the malignant powers of evil, from the tyranny of evil habit, from the bondage of heredity.

By Thy emptying Thyself of glory, by Thy poverty and nakedness, by the seeming failure of Thy Death, save me. Save me v. 4.
from utter loss, even from losing Thee. O Thou who art Loving-kindness and the very Word of mercy, save me from re- v. 5.
lapse into sin, from the bitterness of despair, from the thanklessness of spiritual death.

"*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, esto mihi Jesus, et salvum me fac.*"

"Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, be to me a Saviour, and save me."

Point 3. The life of the restored soul is a life of faith and prayer, of gratitude and reparation, of power to claim the entire mercy of God. So, though her punishment may continue for a while, that as "the kind convincer of the soul" God may deal with her to "show her what evil she hath procured for herself,"[1] yet she has an assurance

[1] Saint Augustine.

of final victory, for she knows that in the mutual response of prayer she is accepted of God, Whose might is now her protection, Whose indignation is no longer her terror, but her deliverance.

Ps. lxv, 16. O come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things
v. 9. He hath done for my soul. He hath not turned away His mercy from me, but He hath heard the voice of my weeping; my prayer hath been found acceptable in His sight.

v. 1. He has rebuked me, but with judg-
Heb. xii, 4, 5. ment; He has not spared to chasten me, because He loves me as a Father. For I had not resisted unto blood striving against sin, but I had forgotten His consolation, and been wearied with His chastening, and neglected His discipline.

Rom. v, 3, 4. O God, I thank Thee for Thy dealings with me, for the tribulation that worketh patience, and for the trial that bringeth
v. 6, 8. forth hope. O my God, make me swift to arise from sin, resolute to put away every unworthy suggestion, to flee every dangerous occasion, strong and yet stronger to believe in Thy restoring grace. O Lord,
Ps. lv, 10. Thou art my God; my enemies are Thy enemies; when I call upon Thee I know
v. 10. they shall be put to flight. O cover with shame and confusion all within me that is not on Thy side; let my memory, my understanding, my affections, my will, be turned backward if they go forth to evil, so that they may speedily return to Thee.

Let no evil thing from without approach to hurt me; no mocking memories, no lying spirit of despair; but restore my peace and accomplish my healing in Thine own time, so that after I have suffered awhile I may be perfected and confirmed and stablished. Support my hands that they may be lifted up in praise, strengthen my knees that they may be bent in prayer, grant me to make straight steps with my feet that I may walk in Thy ways and do Thy bidding; so that all men may know that this is Thy Hand, and that Thou, Lord, hast done it, because Thou art very merciful and of tender mercy.

v. 7, 10.
v. 2.
1 Pet. v. 10.
Heb. xii. 12, 13.
2 Ps. cviii, 27.

PSALM XXXI

1. Beati quorum remissæ sunt iniquitates, et quorum tecta sunt peccata.

Blessed [*lit.*, happy] are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sins are covered [so blessed, so happy, that they cannot keep silence, but must tell out their joy.]

2. Beatus vir cui non imputavit Dominus peccatum, nec est in spiritu ejus dolus.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed iniquity; and in whose spirit there is no guile. [The forgiven soul has no need of guile; it has nothing to conceal, for God knows all its past and has forgiven it; it has no need to act a part, for God looks not at its sin, does not count it, will not see it, but sees only His creature, whom He loves and has restored. Neither is it twisted with self-deceits, since God's free and full forgiveness is a pledge and seal of its own simplicity of intention.]

[These two verses form a prologue; the spontaneous outburst of the inspired singer proclaiming the happiness of the forgiven man, the blessedness resulting

from restoration. Sin is described under three heads, (the exact signification of which is lost in translation); firstly (v. 1), "transgression," i.e., the deliberate defiance of God, breaking away from Him and rejecting Him; secondly (v. 1), "sin," i.e., a coming short, a deflection or failure to discern the true aim; thirdly (v. 2), "iniquity," a moral perversion or distortion. For each of these three delineations of sin the psalmist realises a corresponding blessedness of forgiveness; the "transgression" is "taken away," *lit.*, the burden is removed; the "sin" is "covered"—"buried in oblivion," as St Augustine has it—so that the judge sees nothing for which to condemn; the "iniquity" is "not imputed"; i.e., the items on the debtor's side are wiped out, and this, not in grudging despair of obtaining payment for a "bad debt," but with the compassionate large-heartedness of the rich man who with one stroke of his pen cancels the

cf. Ex. xxxiv. 7.

Matt. xviii, 27, 32.

whole account. "I forgave thee all the debt because thou besoughtest me."]

3. Quoniam tacui, inveteraverunt ossa mea, dum clamarem tota die.

Because [so long as] I kept silence, my bones waxed old, [*al.*, were bruised, or, wasted away.] Whilst I cried out [*al.*, through my roaring] all the day long. [Not the meek voice of the penitent, but the "accents of anger, words of agony, voices high and hoarse" which Dante hears among those separated from God.[1]

4. Quoniam die ac nocte gravata est super me manus tua, conversus sum in ærumna mea, dum configitur spina. [*al.*, confringitur spina] [versatus sum in miseria mea, cum exardesceret messis.][2]

For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; I am turned [i.e., I writhe] in my anguish, while the thorn is fixed in [or, is broken into] my flesh. [There are many renderings of this verse. Most of the modern commentators give it, My moisture was turned, or dried up, as in the droughts of summer.]

[By the bones wasted or bruised in silence is meant that the whole strength and foundation of the being is racked and strained by the sense of sullen loneliness; the

[1] Inferno. Cant. iii, 25.

[2] Vers. Heb. Hieron.

thorn transfixing the flesh, or the moisture dried up, represents the continuous acute pain of conscience, exhausting all the sources of life and nourishment. Sternly true and very terrible is this description of a soul feeding on itself in the restlessness of a stubborn holding aloof from God ; and it makes the contrast of the next verse stand out in strong relief.]

I acknowledged [lit., I began to acknowledge] my sin unto Thee ; and mine iniquity I covered not [because I covered it not, Thou hast covered it—cf. v. 1]. I said, "I will confess against myself my sins unto the Lord ; [in colloquial language, I will turn king's evidence against myself] and Thou—Thou didst take away the iniquity [lit., the guilt] of my sin.

[How fierce the struggle —and while the fetters of pride bound me as brass, how seemingly impossible the confession — yet the means of restoration how simple—with the simplicity of things Divine. The swift

5. Delictum meum cognitum tibi feci, et injustitiam meam non abscondi. Dixi, confitebor adversum me injustitiam meum Domino ; et tu remisisti impietatem peccati mei.

turning of the will, the breaking of the sullen silence in the brief word "I will confess my sins unto the Lord," and behold, God was ready with the royal brief of pardon before the confession was yet spoken, while the "peccavi" yet hung inarticulate upon my lips.—cf. 2 Kings xii, 13.]

[And here the singer, overflowing with gratitude at the remembrance of his own restoration, breaks forth into an intercessory aspiration, that like wonders may be wrought for others.

6. Pro hac orabit ad te omnis sanctus in tempore opportuno. Verumtamen in diluvio aquarum multarum, ad eum non approximabunt.

For this shall every one that is holy pray to Thee in a seasonable time, and yet in a flood of many waters they shall not come nigh him. [An exceedingly difficult verse. It may helpfully be compared with Isa. lv, 6. The words "for this" are obscure. The most probable sense is, Because of our need for pardon and Thy readiness to grant it shall every one that is holy [*al.*, all men of love] pray to Thee in a seasonable time, [i.e., a

time when Thou mayest be found]; for assuredly in a flood of great waters they shall not come nigh him. Great doubt exists among commentators as to who is the "him" referred to; most, including Jerome, Augustine and Bellarmine believe it to be God. Others think it represents the saints, or "men of love." But the meaning is practically the same in either case. If the soul, by neglecting prayer, has raised so great a barrier between itself and all that is good, it will fail both of communion with the Saints and of union with God; for the two degrees of prayer are not different in kind, but interchangeable and mutually dependent. For the whole verse, cf.—2 Cor. vi, 2; Prov. i, 28.]

7. Tu es refugium meum a tribulatione quæ circumdedit me; exultatio mea, erue me a circumdantibus me.

Thou art my refuge from the trouble which hath encompassed me; Thou art my joy; deliver me from them that surround me. [*al.*, Thou art my hiding-place; Thou wilt preserve me from trouble; Thou wilt compass me round with songs of deliverance.]

[It is not perfectly clear whether in the following verse the psalmist is again teaching and exhorting in his own person, or whether, by a dramatic transition, the words are spoken as by God; but the great proportion of Catholic commentators look upon them in this latter sense—as the Divine message to the restored soul, which the inspired teacher is charged to deliver.

8. Intellectum tibi dabo, et instruam te in via hac qua gradieris; firmabo super te oculos meos.

I will give thee understanding, and will instruct thee in this way wherein thou must go; and I will fix mine eyes upon thee. [*al.*, with mine eye upon thee will I guide, or counsel thee.]

9 Nolite fieri sicut equus et mulus, quibus non est intellectus.

In camo et freno maxillas eorum constringe, qui non approximant ad te.

Be not as the horse and mule, which have no understanding.

With bit and bridle curb their jaws, who come not near unto Thee [*al.*, and they will not come nigh to Thee, or if they come not nigh to Thee. The probable meaning is, that if the stubborn will refuses to be drawn by love, happy for it if God employ the sterner

means. But the verse is doubtful. The alternatives are: If they will not come nigh to thee, they must be forcibly brought: or, if they are withheld, they will not be able to come near with fierce intent to hurt.]

[In the next verse the psalmist sums up his own experience.]

Many are the scourges [*al.*, the sorrows; and the full meaning lies in the combination of the words] of the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy [lit., lovingkindness] shall compass him about.

10. Multa flagella peccatoris; sperantem autem in Domino misericordia circumdabit.

Rejoice in the Lord, and exult, ye just; and shout for joy, all ye that are of a right heart. [If you are right with God, what need you more? Who shall rob you of your joy?]

11. Lætamini in Domino, et exultate, justi; et gloriamini omnes recti corde.

THIS is both a psalm of penance and a psalm of beatitude; for it is a song of the blessedness of penance.

It is an anticipation of the blessing assured by Jesus Christ to them that mourn; "they shall be comforted" even with the abiding consolation of the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the indwelling Comforter. John xiv, 16, 17. It is the fruit of a stern but blessed experience, and the fulfilment of the promise

of Psalm l, 15 ; for it describes the progress of true penance ripening into the fruit of charity for the souls of others.

In verses 1-5 the psalmist describes the corruption and misery of his whole being while yet in his sin ; in verse 5 his turning to God and the instant pardon consequent on it ; verses 6, 7, 9 express his longing that others may be saved ; v. 8 is God's message to them through him ; in verses 10 and 11 he reiterates the mercies received by him, and his joy in a life of grace.

Point 1. The Divine dealings with the sinner are progressive, in accordance with the wisdom and patience of Almighty Love. By permitting him to suffer, God causes the will to be turned, unconsciously to itself, and thus opens to the soul the purgative way ; enabling it to see that the sufferings it has brought on itself are nevertheless His Hand, and also that the sting and bitterness of that suffering lie in its own loneliness and restlessness, and in the silence that is born of separation from Him.

v. 1. O God, we are in great straits, for we have sinned ; and often we do not dare to speak, when we ought rather to fear to keep
Job xxxiii, 24. silence. O God, find wherein Thou mayest be merciful to us, and deliver us ; break down the barriers of our pride ; cast out of
v, 1, 2. us the dumb spirit. O Lord Jesus Christ, let the threefold guilt of our sin, its blindness, its ignorance, its malice, appeal to Thy threefold Compassion ; do

Thou, O Divine Sin-bearer, carry for us the intolerable burden under which we stagger and fall; bury our guilt in the deep of Thy compassionate Heart; pay all our debt with the ransom of Thy precious Blood.

O God, give us grace to feel Thy Hand v. 3. 4.
in all our miseries, through all our ruin; even when our judgment is warped and our will weakened; when our self-respect has failed us, and our whole being seems shrivelled and sick unto death. Withdraw not Thyself from us; rather let us suffer unceasingly, so it be under Thy Hand; till Its heavy pressure be changed into 'a sweet and most powerful uplifting[1];' till in our anguish we are turned to Thee; till the sharp thorn of Thy displeasure transfixing us become 'the joyous and healthful wound of Thy love,'[2] piercing us unto salvation.

O Lord, open our lips, and in our con- v. 5.
fession our mouth shall show forth Thy praise. Hide us with Thee in the tribunal of penance, there to draw the poison from our wounds, to repair our waste, to fill our veins with fresh life, to rekindle our fire, to renew our ideals. There do Thou through Thy priest speak the word that shall unseal the fountain of our grief; prevent us with Thy grace; be already in our hearts and on our lips, that we may truly confess our sins; with the generous haste of love anticipate our pardon; speak to our hearts, and give us

[1] Saint Augustine. [2] Saint Bonaventura.

words wherewith to answer Thee; help us to speak when we cannot look up, to look up to Thee even when we cannot speak.

Point 2. By union with the Holy Ghost through penance, God leads the restored soul by new paths, which it had not known save for its great need. His love draws it through the way of purifying into the broader channel of His illuminating grace, teaching it many things in the silence that is born of union with Him.

v. 8. O God, after that Thou hast bidden us to speak, bid us to keep silence that we may hear Thy Voice. Instruct us in the way wherein we must go, and fill us with the Spirit of understanding, that Thy words fall no longer on deaf ears, Thy counsels be no more offered to darkened minds.

v. 7. For Thou compassest us with songs of
Luke xv, 10. deliverance, making the Angels to rejoice at our penance. Let the Sacrament of Reconciliation be to us a source of light, an increase of self-knowledge, and a revelation of Thy Love; and while it is within us the foundation of a deep peace and the build-
2 Cor. vii, 9, 10. ing up of joy, let it be also for the continual increase of that godly sorrow which worketh carefulness and fear and the blessed revenges of love.

Then Thou wilt be our All, yea, more than our All; because through our emptiness our need has become the greater, and through Thy great forgiveness our love shall attain to deeper knowledge of Thy
v. 7. depths. For according as we have known

the fierceness and malice of the enemy, we shall know Thee for our refuge, and Thy Heart for our hiding-place; and the greater hath been our peril, the more abundant shall appear the kindness of Thy deliverance. Our ignorance shall become to us a blessing, since Thou wilt teach us and none other; warned by past errors, we shall not be deceived to follow false teachers nor flatter ourselves with self-guidance; but we shall say: 'It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me.' Ps. cxviii, 71.

So Thou wilt lead us step by step. In childlike confidence we shall look to Thee; and Thou wilt "make sure upon us Thy love,"[1] for Thou wilt set Thine eyes upon us for good: calling us, recalling us, guiding us; and because we shall give Thee our hearts, our eyes shall keep Thy ways; yea, and we shall speak of Thee to others, and shall teach Thy ways to the unjust and the sinner. v. 8. Jer. xxiv, 6. Prov. xxiii, 26. Ps. l, 15.

Then shall we be no longer stubborn as the beasts that, because they have no understanding, would govern themselves. Yet if at any time we should again resist Thee, if in pride, in rashness or in fear 'we would be our own ruler and therein our own scourge,'[2] do for us what man does for horse and mule, that by chastisements Thou mayest make us to bear Thy rule, and mayest keep us at Thy side in the discipline of love. Then shall we not fear in the time of the v. 9. v. 6.

[1] Saint Augustine. [2] Saint Augustine.

water-floods ; for Thou Who wilt be to Thine
Is. xxviii, 2. enemies as the violence of many waters overflowing, as a flood making an end, art to
Ps. xlv, 4. Thy Church, Thy holy City, the flowing river making her glad. Within her, strong in the fellowship of prayer, Thy holy ones dwell secure, and the humble and the penitent find refuge ; the roaring of the torrent makes for joy, for it is the voice of Thy protecting Love ; nor shall there be for those who abide within that holy place a time when they cannot come nigh to
John x, 29. Thee, for no one can snatch them out of Thy Hand, nor separate them from the Communion of Thy Saints.

Point 3. When God has purified and illuminated the soul, and has given to it the gift of simplicity, which is a pearl of great price, it loves Him simply and trusts Him wholly, and being compassed about with His mercy and charity treads the unitive way with great joy.

O God, what need we any further words?
Ps. xxxiii, 9. Blessed, thrice blessed, is the man that hopeth in Thee, who, tasting how sweet Thou art, tasteth nothing out of Thee. Happy with exceeding happiness is he to
tIsai, xl, 2. whose heart Thou hast spoken ; whose evil
v. 1. is come to an end, whose iniquity is par-
v. 2. doned ; in whose spirit there is no guile, because Thou Who art the Truth hast filled it with Thyself.

v. 11. O God, give us a simple love of Thee, a right heart set to do Thy will. Then
John xvi, 22. shall our sorrow be no longer sorrow, for

it shall be turned into joy, even though we bear the marks of the wounds, even though we yet do penance for the evil which we have brought upon ourselves; for by the unfolding of Thyself to us we shall see Thee even here, our Absolver, our Restorer, our Justifier. Then shall our joy be full and yet more full, and no man shall take it from us; for we shall be in Thee, and Thou in us, our Joy, our Strength, and the Renewing of our health; then shall the inhabitants of heaven rejoice with us, and we shall share the blessedness of Thy just ones on earth, for our praise shall be ever in Thee.

2 Esd. viii, 10.

PSALM XXXVII

1. Domine, ne in furore tuo arguas me, neque in ira tua corripias me;

O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine indignation [*lit.*, in the outbursting of Thine indignation], nor chastise me in Thy [hot] wrath. [Punish me, but not adding Thine anger to the chastisement; not with the rigour of justice, but with the restrained tenderness of mercy. Cf. Ps. vi.]

2. Quoniam sagittæ tuæ infixæ sunt mihi, et confirmasti super me manum tuam.

For Thy arrows are fastened in me, and Thy hand hath been strong upon me. [*al.*, Thy arrows are stuck fast in me; and Thy hand presseth down upon me; i.e., with a constant pressure that increases ten-fold the sharp pangs of the arrows' thrust.]

3. Non est sanitas in carne mea, a facie iræ tuæ; non est pax ossibus meis, a facie peccatorum meorum.

There is no health [i.e., no soundness] in my flesh, because of Thy [burning] wrath; there is no peace for [*al.*, no rest in] my bones by reason of my sin. [Wounds cannot endure the heat of the sun's countenance, by reason of the fever and foulness within them, and the whole system shares in their aching and throbbing

pain. Could there be any more vivid description of the interior action of God through the conscience?]

For my iniquities are gone over my head [submerging me as waves], and as a heavy [*al.*, an intolerable] burden are become heavy upon me.

4. Quoniam iniquitates meæ supergressæ sunt caput meum, et sicut onus grave gravatæ sunt super me.

My sores [*lit.*, wounds or bruises, as of stripes] are putrified and corrupted, because of my foolishness. [i.e., through sin, which, breeding corruption, is the climax of folly].

5. Putruerunt et corruptæ sunt cicatrices meæ, a facie insipientiæ meæ.

I am become miserable, and am bowed down even to the end [*al.*, I am filled or bowed down—or bent double—with misery]; I walked sorrowful all the day long.

6. Miser factus sum et curvatus sum usque infinem; tota die contristatus ingrediebar.

For my loins are filled with illusions [*al.*, with burning]; and there is no health [no soundness] in my flesh.

7. Quoniam lumbi mei impleti sunt illusionibus, et non est sanitas in carne mea.

I am afflicted [*al.*, benumbed—*lit.*, deadly cold as a corpse], and humbled [broken] exceedingly; I have roared with the groaning of my heart. [The roaring is the involuntary outlet for the heart's deep bitter-

8. Afflictus sum, et humiliatus sum nimis; rugiebam a gemitu cordis mei.

ness. No portion of the nature has escaped; to the most loathsome horrors of physical suffering is added mental misery born of the consciousness that all is due to, and a chastisement for, past sin and present sinfulness. Fever-heats of passion and deathly chills of remorse succeed each other in intolerable alternations, and are reproduced in the physical sphere, where the diseased condition produces fluctuations between the burning restlessness of fever and the clammy cold of collapse.]

[But the afflicted sinner shows himself to be still the servant of God, both by the effort with which he nerves himself to rise up and with a deliberate act lay his misery before Him, and also by the consolation which he finds in recalling to himself the Divine omniscient love.]

9. Domine, ante te omne desiderium meum, et gemitus meus a te non est absconditus.

Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hid from Thee.

[Then, as if the thought of God brought his spiritual troubles more vividly before him, he turns to the

outpouring of them rather than ofhis bodily suffering.]

My heart is troubled [*al.*, fluctuates; i.e., with the irregular beatings of fever and exhaustion], my strength hath left me, and the light of my eyes itself is gone from me.

10. Cor meum conturbatum est [fluctuabat],[1] dereliquit me virtus mea et lumen oculorum meorum, et ipsum non est mecum.

My friends and my neighbours [*al.*, my lovers] have drawn near, and stood over against me. And they that were near me [*al.*, my kinsmen] stood afar off. [The friends nearest his heart gather round to stare with a cold and cynical gaze; while those whom ties of blood should have drawn close in sympathy stand aloof and shun his company as though he were a leper.]

11. Amici mei et proximi mei adversum me appropinquaverunt, et steterunt; et qui juxta me erant, de longe steterunt.

And they that sought my soul used violence [*al.*, laid snares], and they that sought evils to me spoke vain things [*al.*, slanderous mischief] and meditated deceits [i.e., worked out base plans for my destruction] all the day long. [The words used in Jerome's translation are 'loquebantur insidias,' and

12. Et vim faciebant qui quærebant animam meam. Et qui inquirebant mala mihi, locuti sunt vanitates, et dolos tota die meditabantur.

[1] Vers. Heb. Hieron.

those of the original Hebrew represent in their meaning 'a yawning gulf of destruction,' premeditated and deliberately prepared. Not only does the coldness and heartlessness of friends chill and wound him, but malignant enemies close in upon him with dark plots for his destruction.]

[The psalm now becomes a soliloquy on his course of action and the reasons which inspired it.]

13. Ego autem, tanquam surdus, non audiebam; et sicut mutus non aperiens os suum.

But I [as it were] a deaf man, heard not [i.e., listened not]; and was as a dumb man not opening his mouth.

14. Et factus sum sicut homo non audiens, et non habens in ore suo redargutiones.

And I became as a man that heareth not; in whose mouth there are no reproofs [i.e., no retorts or angry rejoinders.]

[What brings about so strange a silence? Why does he so despise the cruelty, slander, and persecution which surround him, that he neither heeds nor answers? The verses which follow give the reason.]

15. Quoniam in te, Domine, speravi; tu

For in Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; Thou wilt

hear me, O Lord my God. [More forcible is the alternative rendering: "Thou wilt answer for me, O Lord my God."]

exaudies me, Domine Deus meus.

For I said, lest at any time mine enemies should rejoice over me: [*al.*, I have required—for the sake of God's honour and my own—that mine enemies should not rejoice over me]; lest while my feet are moved [i.e., when my feet slip] they speak great things against me [triumphing over me and Thee.]

16. Quia dixi: Nequando super gaudeant mihi inimici mei; et dum commoventur pedes mei, super me magna locuti sunt.

For I am ready for scourges [*al.*, ready to halt, i.e., lame], and my sorrow [i.e., my misery, deep-seated and widespread] is ever before me.

17. Quoniam ego in flagella paratus sum: et dolor meus in conspectu meo semper.

[Here he seems as though, impelled by interior stress, he must needs make a clean breast of the root-trouble, the final cause of the whole ruin.]

For I will [*lit.*, I must] declare my iniquity [to God and man]: and I will consider my sin [i.e. in the light of its results.]

18. Quoniam iniquitatem meam annuntiabo, et cogitabo pro peccato meo.

[Here he reverts—apparently almost involuntarily—to his troubles:]

19. Inimici autem mei vivunt, et confirmati sunt super me; et multiplicati sunt qui oderunt me inique.

But mine enemies live, and are mightier than I [*al.*, they that without a cause are mine enemies are strong]; and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.

20. Qui retribuunt mala pro bonis detrahebant mihi, quoniam sequebar bonitatem.

They that render evil for good have slandered me, [*al.*, are set against me] because I have followed after goodness.

[But the abiding consciousness of his need is his constant recall to prayer].

21. Ne derelinquas me, Domine Deus meus; ne discesseris a me.

Forsake me not, O Lord my God; depart not [far] from me.

22. Intende in adjutorium meum, Domine, Deus salutis meæ.

Haste Thee to help me, O Lord God of my salvation.

This cry seems to sound from out of a deeper darkness than that which prompts any other psalm of penance; a darkness which does not lift, though lighted up by vivid gleams of hope; a black cloud that is not rolled away, but rather fired by God's love piercing through it. In this respect the psalm forms a contrast to all the others called "penitential," which after their sorrow break out into a joyful, even a triumphant note. It begins and ends in a wistful pleading with God; it is the cry of His servant lying wounded and half-dead in the

extremity of a threefold suffering; the horror of long-standing physical corruption, aggravated by the mental torture of loneliness and a sense of wrong wantonly and insolently inflicted, together with a remorseless haunting conviction that all is to be traced to the septic influence of sin. The sufferer finds a bitter-sweet consolation in the very outpouring of his misery; and the entire psalm is an appeal to the mercy and help of God, an expression of confidence in His power and willingness to deliver so soon as the chastisement shall have done its work; but nevertheless it ends, as it began, in darkness, suffering, and need.

The keen vision of the mystical Saints has not failed to perceive in this suffering servant the Royal Sufferer, Jesus Christ Himself, who not only 'bare our sins in His body,' but, as the Holy Ghost tells us, was 'made sin' for us: 'Eum pro nobis peccatum fecit' (2 Cor. v, 21). So, St Anselm says: 'He is sin, and we are justice'; and St Augustine teaches: 'He, the Head of the body, is one person with the members. The persons are not separated, but their dignities are distinguished; because the Head saves, the body is saved; it belongs to the Head to show mercy, to the body to mourn over misery; the office of the Head is to cleanse, the duty of the body to confess sins; yet have they but one speech, in which it is not written when it is the body that speaks, and when the Head; but we indeed, while we hear it, distinguish

the one from the other. He however speaks as one. Do not, when you hear the voice of the body, separate the Head from it; nor the body, when you hear the voice of the Head. They have but one tongue and the same speech, because they are no more twain but one flesh.'

Point 1. The chastisements of God produce in the soul three blessed effects:

1. Consciousness of the vileness of sin, and a profound desire to be delivered from it. For through the effects of sin it becomes inconvenient, painful, loathsome to itself, and so displeasing in its own sight that its self-respect is wounded; thence it begins to draw comparisons between its ideal and its actual condition; the Divine image in which it is made rouses and intensifies in it a longing for its true environment; it realises that this environment is God's love, and simultaneously with this conviction the Holy Ghost shows it that it is under God's wrath.

2. Interior recollection, arising out of enforced separation from external things. When natural conditions hinder all earthly pleasure, when social intercourse is denied and human sympathy fails, the soul is turned in upon its own interior being. Were it driven to reflect on itself only, it would but become a prey to morbid introspection; but in its own depths it is brought face to face with God. Suddenly it beholds Him, and knows Him for its patient possessor, who has waited through all its forgetfulness

and wilfulness, if haply it may turn and recognise Him. When thus He meets it in its garden alone, He calls it by its name, and it instinctively responds: 'Rabboni, which is to say, Master.'

3. A longing desire for Divine sympathy. For when God, separating the soul for Himself, has sweetly called it, and when in grateful love it has yielded itself to His claim, it ceases to listen for other accents, or even to utter its own words, lest it should interrupt or drown His voice. It is in Him and He in it; for it there is none else in heaven or earth. He has become its universe, and it needs no more.

O my God, I am under Thy rebuke; teach me then these mysteries. Let me thank Thee that Thou hast wounded me; let Thine arrows be the arrows of love, pressing into me, piercing me with the intolerable aching of unsatisfied desire, even the longing of my heart for that love for which Thou didst create me. O God, I thank Thee that 'in pity or in vengeance Thou canst melt me; that in my hard-heartedness I cannot thrust back Thy hand.'[1] v. 1, 2, 3.

Lord, save me, lest I perish; for the deep waters of my sins are come in even unto my soul. v. 4.

O great Physician, to Thee I come that I may have life; to no other can I lay bare my shame, my wounds, my corruption. Too long already have I hidden myself, not daring to approach Thee; fearing v. 5.

[1] Saint Augustine.

to show my wounds; despising the healing oil which Thou wouldest pour in and dreading the smart of Thy wine.

v. 4, 5. O God, how supreme my foolishness;
Ps. xviii, 7. I thought I could be hidden from Thee, but
v, 3. who is hid from Thy heat? Thou art as the sun shining in his strength; and in Thy wrath Thou hast burned upon me, so that my pain has become madness; my wounds are inflamed and filled with corruption; one evil memory as a plague-spot has infected me, so that each sin begotten another; and all I feared was the scorching pain of Thy love, nor would I
cf. Ps. lxxiii. that Thou shouldest purify me in Thy mercy.

v. 7. O Lord Jesus Christ, how great my foolishness, my ignorance, and brutishness; yet greater still my misery; I have lost Thee the true Light, and so I am become an enigma unto myself; I am filled with illusions, because I have forgotten Thee
1 John ii, 16. who art the Truth.[1] I have delighted in the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, and have mistaken the glimmer of my human reason for the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
v. 4, 6. I would not bear Thy light burden nor submit myself to Thine easy yoke; and when I had made for myself a grievous load, I would not cast it on Thee; and behold, it has become intolerable, so that I am bent double, as one who has long borne a great

[1] Saint Augustine.

weight; and what wonder? For I have tried to bear alone the sin which made Thee to stumble and fall in the steep ascent of Calvary.

Truly there is no soundness in me; for my nature, which Thou gavest me to be my joy and Thine, has become my punishment; in every part of it I have sinned, in every part I suffer. My undisciplined desires run riot, so that I am set on fire, yea, on fire of hell; afterwards I am as in a swoon, or as a dying man who cannot see the sun, who asks for light because his eyes are darkened with the shadow of death. v. 7. v. 7. 8. 10.

O God, to whom then shall I turn save to Thee? For if I could deliver myself, perhaps I should not have called upon Thee; but Thou hast made me an outcast, and hast driven me as far as the poles of heaven, that Thou mightest fetch me back to Thyself and still the beating of my heart. Deut. xxx. 4, 5. v. 10.

Lord, Thou knowest all my desire; Thou knowest that I would come to Thee that I may have life; and Thou hast said that whoso cometh to Thee Thou wilt not cast out. Though the world forsake me, Thou wilt be with me; though the just, knowing my evil ways, believe me forsaken of Thee, and though the evil suspect me if I turn and follow after good; yea, though all misunderstand me, Thou wilt answer for me for in Thee have I put my trust. Whom have I in heaven but v. 9. v. 11. John vi. 37. v. 20. v. 15.

Ps. lxxii, 25, 26. v. 10. Thee? What is there on earth that I desire in comparison of Thee? My flesh and my heart fail for lack of Thee, for desire of Thee; for Thou art the God of my heart. 'This is true blessedness, true life, even to rejoice to Thee, of Thee, for Thee, and there is no other.' [1]

Point 2. A state of chastisement may be a state of highest grace. God does not correct for His own pleasure, neither does He, as man, confuse sin with its consequences. The contrite soul, though scourged, is in no disfavour nor disgrace with Him; rather it is the object of His tenderest love, even of His choicest favours. Therefore, although it abide in thick darkness, even though it cannot feel Him near, it may yet be in closest union with Him if only its will be one with His Will, if it say to Him through all: "Lord, Thou doest and undoest; I am content; I desire only what Thou willest." [2]

v. 15. O Lord, what then is my hope, save to be a sharer in Thy hope; in that assurance of hope which never failed Thee,

v. 2. Job xvi, 15, 17. though Thou wast torn with wound upon wound, though Thine eyelids were dim and Thou wast made a by-word of the

Is. liii, 7. people; though as a meek dumb lamb Thou wast stripped of the garment of Thy Humanity, willingly offering up for sacri-

v. 13, 14. fice every avenue of sense. Is not this the hope of sinners, that they may have a share both in Thy sufferings and in the

[1] Saint Augustine. [2] Thomas à Kempis.

sufferings and the glory of Thy servants; of Abraham, who, proved by many tribulations, was made the friend of God; of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses; of Judith and Tobias and holy Job, chastised by Thee, perfected in Thee; of the pierced Mother in her life of silence and deep pondering, of grief and joy unutterable; of the strong cohort of martyrs, of the hermits and of every saintly soul whose bride was poverty. For these, losing their life in this world, found Thee their riches and their All, and on earth humbly waiting for Thy consolation, are caught up to Thee in the heavenly mystery of the Beatific Vision.

Heb. xi, 17, 21, 24, 25.

Judith viii, 14-16; 22-24. Tob. ii, iii. Job xlii, 5, 6.

O Lord, chastise us and rebuke us, that Thou mayest do this great thing in us also; that having nothing, we may possess all things; that being made deaf, we may hear Thee, and being dumb, Thou mayest be our answer; that our earthly vision being dimmed, Thou mayest show us the things that belong unto our peace. So, Thy Hand upon us, the touch of chastening shall be welcome; we shall learn the blessedness of silence, and the enemy shall no more rejoice over us because of our unrestrained words; nor through the unsteadfastness and restlessness of our feet shall we be laughed to scorn and Thou be brought into dishonour.

v. 1.

2 Cor. vi, 10.

vv. 13-16.

Luke xix, 42.

v. 2.

v. 16.

O Lord, we are ready for scourges; make us more ready, and with Thy bruises heal us. Make our sorrow one with Thine; let it be, if Thou willest, a desolation even unto

v. 17.

Is. liii, 5.

v. 5.

Matt. xxvii, 46. death, as if even for things Divine we had
Os. xi, 3, 4. neither sight nor hearing. For if Thou scourge us, Thou wilt bind us to the pillar with bands of love, healing us though we
v. 21, 22. know it not. Thou wilt be our destruction, that Thou mayest be our mightier salvation; Thy help the more present because it seem to tarry; the darkness deepest because Thou, the everlasting Dawn, art nigh, yea already here, though thick clouds hide Thee.

Point 3. Prayer is the mighty power by which suffering is consecrated and transformed; by whose potent virtue all chastisement, even that which is the direct consequence of sin, may become a means of glorifying God. For prayer is the flowing of God into the soul, through its opening itself to receive Him; it is the life of God coming into it to change its selfishness into His charity, its bitterness into His sweet-
Soph. iii, 17. ness, its sadness into His joy. So the Holy Ghost tells us 'He will be silent in His love,' that we may be the more compelled to speak, and that He may listen for the human cry which He loves to hear; so that He shall be able to fill us with His fulness, Who binds Himself by His eternal
Matt. vii, 7. Word: "Ask, and it shall be given you."
v. 15. O God, once more I cry to Thee that Thou art my hope; and in the cry lies my
Os. xiv, 3. hope. O give me words, that I may return to Thee, that I may render the calves of my lips.
Os. vi, 1. O Lord, Thou hast torn, and Thou wilt
v. 1. heal us; Thou Who hast smitten wilt cure

us; we are consumed, therefore with words we will seek Thy Face. v. 3, 5, 7. Os. v, 15.

O Lord, to say to Thee that Thou rebukest is to turn the rebuke into a precious favour, a gift of great value. v. 1.

To tell Thee that Thy Hand is heavy lightens its touch and makes its pressure a Father's blessing. v. 2.

To tell Thee of my wounds, my foolishness, my misery, is healing, wisdom, deliverance. v. 3, 5, 7, 8.

To confess my sins to Thee is as the lifting of a heavy burden, for immediately Thou bearest them for me, and I no longer go heavily and bowed down; to pour out my contrition is balm and ointment for my bruised heart. v. 4, 18.

To speak to Thee of my temptations, of my sorrows, of my restlessness, is strength, consolation, peace. v. 7.

If I tell Thee of my loneliness I am no longer lonely, for Thou art the heart's true comforter, and the friend that sticketh closer than a brother. v. 11, 12.

If I make known to Thee my defeats I am assured of victory; to tell Thee of the fury of mine enemies is to have an Ally mightier than the hosts of hell. v. 18, 19, 20.

O God, give us then words if Thou wilt; or if not words, let our sorrowful sighing come before Thee, let us breathe out our heaviness to Thee. Teach us how to speak though we be silent for very sorrow; grant us the stillness of surrendered wills even while we speak.

O Lord Jesus Christ, teach us to pray. Teach us by Thine infant cries; by Thy nights of wrestling in prayer; by Thy looking up to heaven and sighing; by Thy groaning in spirit; by Thy weeping over Jerusalem; by Thy strong crying and tears; by Thine agony in Gethsemani; by Thy seven last words of power; by Thy Hands stretched forth in sacrifice; by Thy last dying cry piercing the heaven of heavens; by the life-long sacrifice of prayer in Thy human life and death.

v. 21. So Thou wilt never depart from us; Thou wilt be our great salvation, our prayer, our hope, till we come to the fulness of life, even to the light of Thy Countenance, Who hast not despaired of Thy sons, but in mercy hast chastised us.

Prov. xvi, 15.
Prov. xix, 18.

"We sinners beseech Thee hear us."

"That we may not reject the discipline of the Lord, nor be wearied whilst we are rebuked by Him, we beseech Thee hear us."

"That in all our diseases and afflictions we may speak no foolish thing against the Lord, we beseech Thee hear us."

"That we may always bear about in our body the dying of Jesus Christ, we beseech Thee hear us.

"That our momentary and light tribulation may work for us an eternal weight of glory, we beseech Thee hear us."

PSALM L

1. Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam ; et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum, dele iniquitatem meam.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy great mercy ; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out mine iniquity. [*al.*, Pity me according to Thy loving-kindness ; according to Thine overflowing compassionateness, wipe out [*lit.*, erase], do away my transgressions.]

[The foundation of the sinner's hope is the mercy of God, which has its root and source in the essence of the Divine Nature ; he does not implore God to assume the rôle of a merciful judge, but pleads the kindness and compassion which are inseparable from the perfection of the Divine Charity. The Vulgate translation fails to reproduce the depth of this beauty, a failure perhaps inevitable, because due to mental and philological differences between the Hebrew and Latin races.]

2. Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea,

Wash me thoroughly [*al.*, more and yet more]

et a peccato meo munda me.

from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

[The metaphor in the first part of the verse is that of a fuller passing his fabric through several processes of cleansing, and the second part refers to the ceremonial washing in the purification of lepers. —Lev. xiii, 6, 34; xiv, 8, 9. Cf. v. 5. The word 'cleanse' has thus a twofold meaning, i.e., 'make me clean,' and then 'declare me clean.' God, having regard to the twofold debt demanded of man for the perfect fulfilment of the law of charity, requires for him a twofold justification, interior and exterior; his restoration to a right relation, not only with his God, but also with his fellow-men.]

3. Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco, et peccatum meum contra me est semper.

For I know [*lit.*, I myself know] my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. [As a spectre that haunts me night and day, as my accuser with whom I am ever face to face. Did not the remembrance of the deceived and murdered Urias perhaps follow David day and night? Did one detail of

Stephen's death escape Saul's memory? Was not the scene in Gethsemani ever present to the traitor, with the fierce blast of remorse that drove him to his ruin? So to the impenitent soul the spectre of sin goads it to despair and destruction, but with the finger of love it beckons the contrite sinner back to his Father's house.]

[A world of wistful hope is hidden in the 'for' which heads the verse. 'I appeal to Thy compassion because, low as I have fallen, I am still in Thine image; for I have not wholly lost the moral sense which Thou didst implant in Thy man, whom Thou madest to be but a little less than Divine.'—Ps. viii.]

4. Tibi soli peccavi, et malum coram te feci ;

Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned ; before Thee have I done the evil. [*al.*, and done that which is evil in Thy sight] ;

[v. 4 gives the key to v. 3. Why is his sin ever before him? Is it not because he is made in the image of God that his eyes apprehend, however dimly, the deep moral truths per-

petually present to the Divine vision? 'My sin is ever before mine eyes because in the sight of Thine eyes I have done this evil.' Man's responsibility to his fellow-men sinks into nothing at the bar of the supreme Divine Master to Whom he stands or falls. So also every sin committed by man against his neighbour is done primarily against God, because it is an injury against a being created in His image. Cf. Gen. ix, 6.]

ut justificeris in sermonibus tuis, et vincas cum judicaris.

that in Thy words Thou mightest be justified; that in Thy judgment Thou mightest triumph [i.e., be vindicated].

[Sin, weighed by God's measure, will always be found to have been by Him accurately estimated. He is the only competent judge of the human conscience; He has given to man an affinity with Himself, enabling him to apprehend good and evil; and the Incarnate life of Jesus Christ is man's judgment of God; it is the true test of ethics; the royal measure; the only just and un-

varying standard by which to estimate character.]

5. Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum, et in peccatis concepit me mater mea.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin hath my mother conceived me.

6. Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti; incerta et occulta sapientiæ tuæ manifestasti mihi.

Behold, Thou hast loved truth; the uncertain and the hidden things of Thy wisdom hast Thou made manifest unto me. [*al*, Thou desirest truth in the dark places—or, in the inward parts; therefore in the secret place Thou wilt make me to understand wisdom.]

[The Vulgate is most obscure; the alternative rendering is probably the true one, and sheds a beautiful light on the passage. The two verses are seen to be the complement one of the other, and this is accentuated by the "Ecce" which introduces both. As in the material so in the spiritual order, the processes which shape and form life are secret, hidden in the counsels of the creative Wisdom. Deep are the mysteries of material life, in the creation and fusion of body and soul, in

latent powers of development, in tendencies inherited for good or ill. But deeper still the mighty secret of man's regeneration through the mysterious processes of God's love in Jesus Christ, Who, Incarnate Wisdom and very Truth, illumines the dark places where the life of the spirit is informed and fashioned and secretly brought to perfection, where the fault of original sin is rectified by the supernatural creation in baptism; until the time come for the new birth to be accomplished—in the perfecting of each soul of the whole race.]

7. Asperges me hyssopo, et mundabor; lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.

Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow. [*al.*, Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.] [This latter rendering, making the verse a direct prayer, is preferred by most modern commentators. David, the penitent, the seer, the lover of God, with the deep insight born of love

discerns the spiritual realities underlying the ceremonial of the Law, and as through a glass darkly sees by anticipation the virtue and glory of the Christian Sacraments, which are the Divinely-conceived points of fusion between the spiritual and the material. So the sprinkling with the blood of the kid immolated over the living waters (cf. Lev. xiv, 4 ff.) is no mere ritual purification, but the touch of God, purging, cleansing, quickening ; foreshadowing, and already in a measure anticipating, the efficient virtue of the Cross, the saving tide of Water and Blood flowing for the remission of sins.]

8. Auditui meo dabis gaudium et lætitiam, et exultabunt ossa humiliata.

Thou shalt make me to hear [*al.*, make me to hear] of joy and gladness, and [i.e., that] the bones which were humbled [*al.*, which Thou hast crushed] may rejoice. [No stronger metaphor could be employed to illustrate the restoring power of God than the capacity for rejoicing in a framework of which the bones had been crushed up—a physical impossi-

bility. The word used to express the joy denotes more than a calm happiness—rather exuberant delight in existence, the outcome of a sound and vigorous body.]

9. Averte faciem tuam a peccatis meis, et omnes iniquitates meas dele.

Turn away Thy Face from my sins [the expression suggests a deliberate act of the Divine Will in refusing to look at them], and blot out all my iniquities [wipe the page clean, without so much as a glance at it].

10. Cor mundum crea in me, Deus, et spiritum rectum [*al.*, spiritum stabilem.[1]] innova in visceribus meis.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew within me a right [*al.*, a steadfast] spirit.

11. Ne projicias me a facie tua, et spiritum sanctum tuum ne auferas a me.

Cast me not away from Thy face [*al.*, from Thy presence], and take not Thy holy Spirit from me. ['Whose Face he feareth, upon the Face of the same he calleth.'][2]

12. Redde mihi lætitiam salutaris tui, et spiritu principali confirma me.

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and strengthen me with a perfect spirit. [*al.*, Uphold me with a free, or willing, spirit. The willing heart is free, noble, generous;

[1] Vers. Heb. Hieron. [2] Saint Augustine.

detached from things of sense, ready to offer up itself and its all to God.]

[Vv. 9, 10, and vv. 11, 12 each express, though in a different way, the purgative and re-creative work of God in the soul. Vv. 9, 10. He Who hides His Face from seeing sin, Who makes white the blackened page, Who cleanses the heart, leaves it not empty, shut up, darkened, but immediately turns the full light of His Countenance upon it, and uses the fulness of His resources to recreate, to adorn, to stablish it. And by purifying and illuminating the heart, which is the centre and source of the entire being, He re-establishes the possibility of intercommunion between Himself and His creature.]

[Vv. 11, 12. But while He hides His Face from the sin, He keeps the soul in suffering, steeped in the fiery atmosphere of His Presence; the faint flicker of the holy Spirit burning dim and low, waiting to be kindled into

flame by the breath, the murmur, the mighty wind of prayer; till it leaps up into the fiery Tongue of joy, uplifting and upholding the new man in the might of a willing spirit; in the sustained energy of a will free, filial, princely, worthy of its royal birth.]

13. Docebo iniquos vias tuas; et impii ad te convertentur.

So will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be turned back to Thee. [So will I—even I who have taught the ways of evil—teach Thy ways to sinners. So David, Peter, Paul, Augustine by their eloquence, so Magdalene by her tears, so the penitent thief by the flash of his faith, by the silence of his death, have taught the world to turn to Thee.]

14. Libera me de sanguinibus, Deus, Deus salutis meæ, et exultabit lingua mea justitiam tuam.

Deliver me from sins of blood [*lit.*, bloods; i.e., things and stains of blood; blood-guiltiness], O God, Thou God of my salvation [i.e., redemption]; and my tongue shall extol Thy justice.

[A renewed prayer for deliverance from the haunting sense of blood,—the guilt of bloodshed; the

murder of his own soul; the murder of the souls of others through the scandal he has given. Christian commentators have always seen a reference to Calvary; a prayer lest by relapse into mortal sin Jesus Christ be crucified afresh; that His death be not laid to our charge unto condemnation, nor His Blood be on us and on our children save for salvation.]

Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord; and my mouth shall declare Thy praise.

15. Domine, labia mea aperies; et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam.

[So shall the tongue of him who is delivered proclaim the justice of God, in that He has mercy and not sacrifice; for in regard to us the pardon of sin is mercy; but in regard to Jesus Christ, its pardon is justice; 'for the merit of Jesus Christ contains within itself the perfection of justice.'[1] 'There is joy for all the members in the sorrows of the Head."[2]

The restoration of the soul is, then, to bear twofold fruit, in the conversion

[1] Bellarmine. [2] F. Faber.

of others, and in the pure praise of God. The self-appropriated and misused gifts are to be given back for God's glory; the mouth and lips which through defilement had been dumb in His service, are to be restored to their true function by the Divine "Ephpheta."]

16. Quoniam si voluisses sacrificium, dedissem utique; holocaustis non delectaberis.

For if Thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would surely have given it [*al.*, for Thou delightest not in sacrifices, that I should have offered them]; in burnt-offerings [lit., whole burnt-offerings], Thou wilt not be delighted [i.e., Thou hast no pleasure].

17. Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus; cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies.

A sacrifice unto God is a troubled [*al.*, a broken] spirit; a contrite and humble [*al.*, broken] heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. [God desires not a material, but a spiritual sacrifice; for sacrifice is a responsive act, and God has created man's nature spiritual in the image of His perfect Spirit. Yet God despises not man's material nature; but, desiring to receive from him an undivided service, wills to have a material sacrifice

made spiritual, and a spiritual sacrifice with its material complement. So Jesus Christ, the one perfect Sacrifice, is offered on the Cross, a Victim both material and spiritual; and this same Sacrifice is renewed materially yet spiritually in His Body and Blood sacramented upon the Altar].

Deal favourably, O Lord, in Thy goodwill, with Sion, that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up. [*al.*, Do good in Thy good pleasure; build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.]

18. Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate tua Sion, ut ædificentur muri Jerusalem.

Then shalt Thou accept [*al.*, be pleased with, or delight in] the sacrifice of justice; the offerings and whole burnt-offerings [i.e., 'burnt-offerings' whose smoke ascends before Thee, and 'whole burnt-offerings' which are utterly consumed as an entire oblation to Thee]; then shall they lay calves [i.e., the entire and undivided gift] upon Thine altar.

19. Tunc acceptabis sacrificium justitiæ, oblationes et holocausta; tunc imponent super altare tuum vitulos.

[The two last verses are in all probability a later post-exile addition, made when the Psalm came to be used as the

common voice of penitence in public worship. They have reference to the captivity, to the fall and re-building of Jerusalem, and to the restoration of the Temple worship. But their central thought is in perfect agreement with the spirit of the Psalm. When the restoration of God's people is complete, when He triumphs in their hearts, when the Holy City is rebuilt, then will He delight in the worship which He has commanded; for the sacrifices shall be sacrifices of justice; and the worship shall be glorious, without and within; the combined offering of all glory and beauty which He has created in the things of sense, and of the interior loveliness of spirit and truth.]

THE psalm of psalms; the cry of the Church in every age, at every season; for the Bride, to whom the purity and perfections of the Bridegroom have been revealed, knows and deeply mourns her own unworthiness; the cry also of each true penitent, of all souls that are converted and seek God, of whom St Augustine says, 'Behold, Thou art there in their heart, in the heart of those that confess to Thee, and

cast themselves upon Thee, and weep in Thy bosom, after all their rugged ways. Then dost Thou graciously wipe away their tears, and they weep the more, and joy in weeping; even for that Thou, Lord, Who madest them, dost renew and console them.'

By the almost universal consensus of Catholic tradition, this psalm is held to be the utterance of David after his great sin with Bathshebee; when by the mouth of the prophet Nathan the voice of God had spoken to him the piercing word, 'Thou art the man;' that word which begot both the confession, 'I have sinned against the Lord,' and the immediate message of pardon, 'The Lord also hath taken away thy sin.' 2 Kings, xi, xii.

The dealings of God with the soul are not reckoned by time; in a flash He reveals the sinner to himself; the human heart made in the image of His Heart gives back the instant signal; and God, with the swift response of fiery love, cleanses the spirit. Then, trembling and astonished, the cleansed soul cries out to Him; and the work of restoration, begun in the silence of that secret miracle, is increasingly accomplished in the blessed pain of sorrow and love.

True penance—that which springs from the sorrow that is according to God—has three Divine characteristics by which it may be known and tested. 2 Cor. vii 10.

It is abiding; it is fruitful; its end is God's glory.

Point 1. True penance is abiding, for it comes from God, with Whom there is no James i, 17.

change nor shadow of alteration. It is not a mood, a humour, a wind which blows as it lists and veers with contrary currents; but it is an interior change, a process; for it is the coming of God into the whole nature, to possess it, to be one with it, to be its renewing, its strength, its sensitiveness. It is Substance filling the empty shadow, Life quickening death; the restoration of the entire being, that it may be re-claimed, re-set for God, its true Purpose and End.

v. 1. O God, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us. Let deep call to deep; let Thine unfathomable compassions answer to the
Isai. xliii, 25. abyss of our need. O Thou Who for Thine
Jer. xxxi, 34. own sake blottest out iniquities, and because Thou lovest to be known of men rememberest no more our sins, have mercy upon us.

Isai. xliii, 26. O God, Who in Thy condescension speakest to us as man to man, saying to us, "Put Me in remembrance, tell Me if thou hast anything to justify thyself," have mercy on us; for Thou knowest that we are
v. 3, speechless and have nothing to say. 'Thou turnest us round towards ourselves, and thrustest us before our own eyes,'[1] that we
v. 3. may behold our foulness and hate it. Our sin is ever before us, its own stern avenger; filling and haunting our memory, confusing and terrifying our understanding, paralysing
2 Kings xii, 5, 6. our will; at Thy bar we stand self-convicted, children of death, who must make a fourfold reparation to Thee and to our

[1] Saint Augustine.

neighbour, and have not wherewithal to pay.

O Lord Jesus Christ, we have nothing to plead; yet in Thee we have all. We will look up, and will put Thee in remembrance, and will dare to say that we are justified to the uttermost, that the last farthing has been paid. For Thou art our Redeemer, our Ransom, our Sacrifice of reparation, our All. Thy Wounds wipe away our evil; the livid stripes of Thy Scourging are our justification; Thou hidest our sins from us, standing between us and them. O Thou Who art as the refiner's fire, and as fuller's herb, purify us, wash us again and again, more and yet more; purge out of us every stain of sin inherited; the taint of our first parents, marring our very infancy; the sins of our youth and the sins of our later life; the sins of wilfulness and the sins of weakness; the sins which we know, and those which for our blindness we cannot see. As a garment, cleanse us; let Thy whiteness entering in take the place of the dark stains, Thy purity of our impurity; till Thou canst look upon us with delight, and keep us near about Thee, and use us for Thy holy purposes; that many may see it and say, 'This hath God done'; for they shall perceive that it is Thy work.

Prov. xx. 30. v. 2. Mal. iii. 3. v. 5.

O God, merciful and of great pity, look upon the Passion and the Cross, the Wounds and Death of Thy most compassionate Son. By them we plead Thine inviolable possession of us, our irresistible claim to Thee.

vv. 3, 4.

Wisd. xi, 27. Through Him we are Thine, O Lover of souls; Thine by closest ties of blood and kinship; Thine by our nature's need of Thee; Thine by the patience of Thy Spirit
Wisd. xv, 2. within us. 'If we sin we are Thine, knowing Thy greatness,'[1] and our very misery proves us Thine, against Whom only is our sin; Thine are we in the triumph which Thou foreseest in our reunion with Thee; Thine in the upholding grace of perseverance; Thine in death; Thine for time and for eternity.

v. 4. So, Lord, we cry '*peccavi*,' and we smite
1 Kings, xv, 20ff. our breast. But not as Saul, whose heart was not whole before Thee; nor as Judas, who said, 'I have sinned,' yet claimed not
2 Kings xii, 6; xxiv, 10 Job vii, 20. Luke xv. mercy; but as David, as holy Job, as the prodigal, as the publican, as each one among the blessed company of penitents, who has cried, 'I have sinned against Thee, against Thee only;' who, seeking Thee with their whole heart, have found
v. 4. Thee and been found of Thee; and being found of Thee have both justified Thee and been justified of Thee.

v. 6. Grant us with them to learn that Thou art the very Truth, inspiring and requiring truth within those whom Thou secretly fashionest in Thine Image. For Thou formest them and dost lay Thine Hand upon them, teaching them the might and the sweetness of wisdom through Him who is Incarnate Wisdom, through her interceding grace who is both Spouse and

[1] Saint Augustine.

Mother of Wisdom, that they may be made men after Thine own Heart; that in their penance and their restoration, in the justice, prudence and beauty of their human lives, wisdom may be justified by her children.[1] *Jesus, Sol justitiæ, Lux vera, Sapientia æterna, miserere nobis. Sancta Maria, Sedes Sapientiæ, Mater pulchræ Dilectionis, et Timoris, et Agnitionis, et sanctæ Spei, ora pro nobis.* Jesus, Sun of justice, true Light, eternal Wisdom, have mercy on us. Holy Mary, seat of Wisdom, Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope, pray for us."

1 Kings xiii. 14.

Matt. xi. 19.

Point 2. True penance is fruitful, for it springs from God, who is Life; and man, created in His Image, inherits the Divine desire to give. In the natural order, this desire conflicts with the instincts of self-love and self-preservation; but when, in the supernatural life, man returns to God, the true End of his being, he is unsatisfied until he accomplishes the will of God, which is the fulfilment of the law of charity.

O God, we thank Thee for the deep instinct of love which Thou hast implanted in us; for the early generosity of our childish hearts; for our human desire to share with others our happiness, our knowledge; for all natural kindliness of heart; for the precious gift of sympathy.

v. 13.

[1] Thou hast truly found wisdom, if thou weepest over the sins of thy past life; if thou despisest all things which the world longs after; if all things seem to thy taste such as in truth they are.—*Saint Bernard.*

For all is Thine own, and comes from Thee, and is rich with promise; and when Thou hast brought us back to reunion with
Luke viii, 15. Thyself, it will bear fruit an hundred-fold in the joy of a supernatural life; in the patience of a heart cleansed and made
Gen. i, 31. fruitful, which Thou shalt rejoice to see, calling it very good.

O Lord, give us such restoration to Thyself that we may claim all that Thou hast promised; that we may both have to give
James v, 20. to him that needeth, and through our charity may save our soul from death, and cover the great multitude of our sins.

Make us as Thy penitent Saints, who, once dark, were made light in Thee, and afterwards reflected Thy light upon other
Dan. xii, 3. darkened souls; who now shine as the stars
v. 8, 12. around Thee. Grant that sinners may see in us the joy which flows from the mighty flood of Thy love, which Thou hast wrought
v. 7. through the living waters of cleansing, through the sprinkling of Thy saving Blood.
Jer. xxxii, 27. O Lord, Thou art the God of all flesh; is anything too hard for Thee? Canst Thou not bring joy out of sorrow? Thou Who
Ezec. xxxvii, 27. madest our bones, canst Thou not restore
v. 8. them? Thou Who hast crushed and humbled
2 Cor. xii, 9, 10. us, wilt Thou not make perfect our weakness in Thy strength?

v. 11. O turn away Thy face from our sins; but not from us, lest thick darkness cover us, and we both lose our way and drag others with us into the abyss; cast us not out from Thy Presence, lest we fall swiftly down to

the depths of hell, helpless in the hateful presence of those who hate Thee. But strengthen us with the consolations, the gifts, the fruits of Thy Spirit, that patient Spirit Who has never wholly departed from us, nor left us to our own misery. Give us purity of heart that we may see Thy face beholding us in love; the Spirit of wisdom, of fortitude, of holy fear, that like Joseph, fearing to sin against Thee, we may be kept steadfast in the midst of evil; that we may be constantly renewed in our mind, ever learning to do Thy Will; our sympathies quickened by our experience; our experience refined and purified in the furnace of penance; transmuted into pure gold, a precious gift wherewith to buy souls for Thee.

v. 11.
v. 10.
Matt. v, 8.
vv. 10, 11.
Gen. xxxix, 9.
Rom. xii, 2.

Restore to us the joy that comes by Thee, our great Salvation; that joy which we lost when we treated our Baptismal innocence as a trifle or a thing of scorn; grant us the vision of consolation, for which Thy holy seer waited in faith that would not fail; the Vision of Thy salvation discerned even now upon the Altar by those who have eyes to see. Let Thy holy Spirit bear in us His fruit of joy, that we may both delight in the sunshine of Thy love, and may bring others out of darkness to rejoice in it. Grant us to dwell in Thy house in the sweet liberty of sonship,[1] full of joy through Thy Countenance, heirs with Thee and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

v. 12.
Luke ii, 25, 30, 32.
Gal. v, 22.
Acts ii, 28.
Rom. viii, 17.

[1] Liberty dwelleth in that which is free—the heart of a son.—*St John of the Cross.*

Spiritus sancte Deus, miserere nobis.

Spiritus Dei habitans in nobis, miserere nobis.

Spiritus per quem diffusa est charitas Dei in cordibus nostris, miserere nobis.

Peccatores, Te rogamus, audi nos.

Ut sicut spiritu vivimus, ita et spiritu ambulemus, Te rogamus, audi nos.

Ut sinceros misericordiæ et charitatis affectus nobis infundere digneris, Te rogamus, audi nos.

Ut errantes instruamus in spiritu lenitatis et mansuetudinis, Te rogamus, audi nos.

God the Holy Ghost, have mercy upon us.

Spirit of God, Who dwellest in us, have mercy upon us.

Spirit, by Whom the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, have mercy upon us.

We sinners beseech Thee hear us.

That as we live in the Spirit, we may also walk in the Spirit, we beseech Thee hear us.

That Thou wouldest vouchsafe to pour into us true affections of love and mercy, we beseech Thee hear us.

That we may instruct the erring in the spirit of gentleness and meekness, we beseech Thee hear us.

Point 3. True penance is abiding and fruitful because it is of God; and as He is its Source, so is He also its End. The soul is turned to God because it was made in His Image and came from Him; because He, loving it, seeks in it His own Reflection and

the response to His Love; because when, through His patient seeking, it has found Him, it has no thought but for Him, no desire but for His pleasure; no word but for His praise, His honour: no action but for His worship and for the satisfaction of His Heart. Its highest and final prayer for deliverance is therefore an entreaty that His glory may shine forth through its restoration.

O God, we are Thine, in spite of all; and shown by Thee we can turn and face the horrors of our sin; clinging to Thy Hand we dare to look on what we have done. v. 14. Ps. xlix. 21.

O God, be Thou our city of refuge, where we may flee and find sanctuary; set not Thy curse upon us, lest, stained with guilt unto blood, we go out from Thy Face as Cain, and become fugitives in bitter loneliness, cast forth from Thee and from Thy household; lest Satan enter into us as he entered into the traitor, and we become a perpetual shame. Deut. xix, 10. Ps. cxlii. 9. Gen. iv. 14, 16. John xiii. 30. Jer. xxiii. 40.

O Lord Jesus Christ, deliver us wholly, utterly, as Thou alone knowest how; proclaim the acceptable year of deliverance to captives, of freedom to those whose hearts are bruised. Take off from us the garb of the convict; let the hateful brand of sin be no longer visible in those whose whole being is made molten in Thy love; give us a garment of praise for the dumb spirit of remorse; change the sullen gaze of despair into the uplifted look of those that hope for redemption. Is. lxi. 1, 2, 4. v. 17. Luke iv. 18, 19. vv. 14, 15. Isa. lxi. 3.

v. 14. O Lord, by Thy Blood-shedding, by Thy Passion, by Thy Death, pardon and deliver us who shed Thy Blood. Deliver us from blood-guiltiness against Thy friends; heal the wounds we have inflicted by wanton cruelty, by passion, by thoughtlessness; the secret stabs of malice and revenge, the hidden thrusts of slander, the sharp and cutting words which have done hurt to Thy sweet Spirit of charity. Restore the souls whose innocence we have murdered, which by our treachery have been led into the enemy's hand or put in dangerous places. Restore our own souls from the swift and bitter death of mortal sin; keep us from crucifying Thee afresh, from making Thee a mockery, from the guilt of Thy Body and Blood in unworthy Communions.

2 Kings xi. 14, 15.

Heb. vi. 6.

1 Cor. xi. 27.

v. 15. O Lord, open our lips; deliver us from the silence of shame and hate, that makes as though it heard not, and will not answer Thee; save us from the sullenness of remorse, despair, death. But give us rather the quietness of humbled spirits, of broken hearts that cannot speak for weeping. For this is the silence of love, which in Thine own good time shall break forth into the voice of joy and praise.

v. 17.

Then shalt Thou, eternal Word, put into our mouth what we ought to say; Thy holy Spirit, Giver of speech, shall open our lips, that by our tongues Thy justice and Thy praises may be extolled; He shall dwell within us, inspiring our every thought and clothing it with words, vouchsafing to use

vv. 14, 15.

us to convince of sin, and of justice, and of judgment; that by our words, whereby we were sometime condemned, we may henceforth be justified. v. 13. John xvi. 8. Matt. xii. 37.

For, Lord, Thou desirest not sacrifices that are the outcome of a divided service, of hearts that deal treacherously with Thee; these had been easy for us to give, for they would have cost us nothing. v. 16.

Yet, have we not dared to offer unto Thee victims and sacrifices for forty years, yea, for a life-time, when our hearts were as tabernacles wherein we set up our idols and worshipped them? Have we not kept fasts for seventy years, yet not fasting before Thee? And because of these things, have we not gone into a bitter captivity of our own making, and become servants of self and slaves of our own passions, fast-bound in misery and iron? Amos. v. 25, 26. Zech. vii. 5. Amos. v. 27.

But now let us build Thee an altar on our broken hearts, a lowly shrine of penance which Thou wilt not despise; let us cast away our strange gods, even the sins which so subtly attract us; that cleansed by Thee, our understanding enlightened and our love purified, we may climb the steep ascent, and stand at last upon the holy hill, the mount of perfection, where our soul shall be but a shrine wherein to offer to Thee the sacrifice of pure love.[1] v. 17. Gen. xxxv. 2.

O God, have mercy on us, have mercy on us; make haste to deliver Thy city, Thy Church, from false and evil things; make v. 1. v. 18.

[1] St John of the Cross.

Thy children true of heart, that it may be Thy power and Thy pleasure to do good to them; lay securely the battlements of Thy Jerusalem in faith and hope and charity;[1] build up her walls with living stones made fast by the mortar of Thy love; strengthen the weak places; heal the breaches which the enemy has made through the rendings of schisms, the sun-
v. 19. derings of strifes and discussions. So shall it be a place wherein Thou delightest to dwell; where Thou, in Whom the Father is well pleased, offerest Thyself upon Thine Altars, the pure Oblation, the supreme Sacrifice of justice; where, united with Thee in the ardent fire of Thy sacrificial love, our hearts may be presented as whole and undivided gifts, our prayer, our praise, our aspirations rise up as the smoke of the incense, our lives laid down upon Thine altar, our wills content to be consumed in Thy Will.

v. 19. So shalt Thou delight in Thy Church, Thy Spouse; yea, even in each one of us
v. 1. redeemed, purified, restored; for through all eternity we shall be the triumph of Thy mercy, the witness and the glory of Thine infinite compassion.

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.

Deus, qui non vis mortem peccatoris, sed magis ut convertatur et vivat, miserere nobis.

Deus, qui Davidem per Nathan ad agni-

[1] Saint Augustine.

tionem culpæ venire fecisti, et qui ejus confitentis peccatum transtulisti, miserere nobis.

Deus, qui propter nimiam charitatem qua dilexisti nos cum essemus mortui peccatis, convivificasti nos in Christo, miserere nobis.

Deus, qui misericordiam vis et non sacrificium, miserere nobis.

Ut omnia detrimentum arbitremur propter Christum, Te rogamus, audi nos.

Ut per multas tribulationes hujus sæculi nos in regnum Dei introire concedas, Te rogamus, audi nos.

Lord have mercy on us, Christ have mercy on us, Lord have mercy on us.

O God, who desirest not the death of the wicked, but rather that he should be converted and live, have mercy on us.

Who didst bring David by Nathan to acknowledge his sin, and didst remit his sin when he confessed it, have mercy on us.

Who, for the exceeding charity wherewith Thou lovedst us even when we were dead in sins, hast quickened us together with Christ, have mercy on us.

Who wilt have mercy and not sacrifice, have mercy on us.

That we may count all things loss for Christ, we beseech Thee hear us.

That through the many tribulations of this world Thou wouldst vouchsafe us entrance into the kingdom of God, we beseech Thee hear us.

PSALM CI

1. Domine, exaudi orationem meam, et clamor meus ad te veniat.

O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto Thee.

2. Non avertas faciem tuam a me; in quacumque die tribulor, inclina ad me aurem tuam; in quacumque die invocavero te, velociter exaudi me.

Turn not away [*al.*, hide not] Thy face from me; in the day when I am in trouble incline Thine ear unto me.

In what day soever I shall call upon Thee, O hearken unto me [*al.*, answer me] speedily. [These three verses form the prologue to the 'complaint' which follows immediately. Before the prayer can be heard and answered, the appeal must find favour with God. Therefore there must be poverty of spirit; it must be the 'poor man,' the needy soul, that 'pours out its supplication'; and there must also be an expression of faith in God's power and readiness to hear.]

3. Quia defecerunt sicut fumus dies mei, et ossa mea sicut cremium aruerunt.

For my days are vanished like smoke, and my bones are dried up [*al.*, burned through] like fuel for the fire [*lit.*, like a firebrand on the hearth].

I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered; for [verily] I have forgotten to eat my bread.

4. Percussus sum ut fœnum, et aruit cor meum, quia oblitus sum comedere panem meum.

Through the voice of my groaning, my bone hath cleaved to my flesh. [Probably the more accurate rendering is, The flesh being consumed, my bones have cleaved to my skin. Cf. Job xix, 20.] [As in other psalms of complaint, the strongest similes are made use of. Hopes and ideals have vanished as smoke into thin air; strength, (typified by the bones), exhausted by ardent passion and inflammatory vehemence, is scorched up, burned through, left without elasticity or vitality; the imagination, the affections, the whole man is struck as it were by sunstroke, shrivelled as grass under the withering heat of the fierce eastern sun; the condition is that of a dried-up body, the flesh wasted away, the skin as parchment clinging to the bones.]

5. A voce gemitus mei adhæsit os meum carni meæ.

I am become like a pe-

6. Similis factus

sum pellicano solitudinis ; factus sum sicut nycticorax in domicilio.

lican of the wilderness; like a night-raven [*al.*, an owl] in the house [i.e., in the ruined dwelling].

7. Vigilavi, et factus sum sicut passer solitarius in tecto.

I have watched, [i.e., sleepless through misery] and am become as a sparrow that sitteth alone upon the housetop.

[The deep solitude of the lonely soul is vividly pictured in the three birds of solitude—the pelican standing motionless by the silent lake, the owl flitting mournfully among the deserted ruins, and the sparrow on the roof pining for its lost mate—a common sight in Palestine.]

8. Tota die exprobrabant mihi inimici mei, et qui laudabant me adversum me jurabant:

Mine enemies reproached me [*al.*, reviled me] all the day long ; they that praised me have sworn together against me [*al.*, they are frantic against me and curse me by my name—i.e., they make me a mark by which to curse others. The verse should probably be rendered In the present tense].

9. Quia cinerem tamquam panem manducabam, et potum meum cum fletu miscebam ;

For [i.e., in truth] I have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping.

Because of Thine indignation and wrath; for Thou hast taken me up and cast me down. [Human life has become bitterness and tears, since man, made 'a little lower than the angels, a little less than divine,' fell from his first estate, and by casting himself down in the wilfulness of sin, was by God cast down, to endure humiliation even to death. Each soul repeats in its own life the history of its first parents. But restoration, collective and individual, is at hand when the humbling is seen to be from God.]

10. A facie iræ et indignationis tuæ, quia elevans allisisti me.

My days have declined as a shadow, and I am withered like grass. [As the shadows lengthen with declining day, till the sun sinks and they are no more; as the grass in the morning grows up, but before evening falls is cut down, dried up and withered; so swiftly draws to a close the natural life of man, ephemeral as the shadows of a day, as as vegetable life and death in tropical lands; a life having in it the seeds of death, which are fostered

11. Dies me sicut umbra declinaverunt, et ego sicut fœnum arui.

by the fierce sun of concupiscence.]

[Here follows a wonderful transition. In the thought of God, the sufferer rises above himself and his sorrows to a noble consolation. Only once again in the course of the psalm, and then but incidentally and to bring into stronger relief the Majesty of God, does he revert to the subject of his own misery. He seems to lose himself in the great human type of which he is so small a unit, and to find rest to his soul in contemplating God's eternity, His compassion, and the consummation of His glory in the re-creation of man. To this he looks forward with assurance, to be accomplished through the restoration of Zion to her true place as the centre of the nations, the city of the King of kings.]

12. Tu autem, Domine, in æternum permanes, et memoriale tuum in generationem et generationem.

But Thou, O Lord, endurest [*al.*, sittest throned] for ever, and Thy memorial [*al.*, Thy memorial name] to all generations.

[The memorial of God

is one, yet manifold, even as His Will is one, yet in workings innumerably diversified. His memorial is both His own existence in power and love, and also His revelation of Himself in many ways, under many figures and similitudes, in His progressive dealings with His creatures; all leading up to and culminating in His manifestation of Himself in the Incarnation, whence virtue flows forth continuously in the Divine Sacrament of the Eucharist, which is His own abiding Memorial of His mercy.]

Thou wilt arise and have mercy upon Sion; for it is time that Thou have mercy upon her, yea, the [set] time has come [i.e., the 'fulness of time' when God shall send His Son (Gal. iv, 4); the moment hidden in God's foreknowledge from the beginning of eternity.]

13. Tu exurgens misereberis Sion, quia tempus miserendi ejus, quia venit tempus;

For Thy servants have delighted in her stones; and they shall have pity on her earth [*al.*, it pitieth them to see her in the dust]. [If the servants of God love

14. Quoniam placuerunt servis tuis lapides ejus, et terræ ejus miserebuntur.

and mourn over the ruins and the sacred dust of the once honoured city, shall not He, her Builder and Maker, have yet greater compassion? And shall not their care and intercession also avail for her speedy restoration?]

[A yet stronger argument follows. Shall not the perfection of the human race be accomplished, that God may be glorified in the children of men whom He Himself hath made?]

15. Et timebunt gentes nomen tuum, Domine, et omnes reges terræ gloriam tuam;

And the Gentiles [i.e., the peoples] shall fear Thy name, O Lord, and all the kings of the earth Thy glory [Whose city shall be more glorious than all the cities of the earth.—The immense magnificence of cities was a leading feature of ancient life];

16. Quia ædificavit Dominus Sion, et videbitur in gloria sua.

For [that] the Lord hath built up Sion, and [that] He shall be seen in His glory [i.e., in the restoration of His temple, the shrine of His presence].

17. Respexit in orationem humilium, et non sprevit precem eorum.

[That] He hath had regard to the prayer of the humble [*al.*, of the poor destitute] and hath not despised their petition.—

[An echo of the inscription above the psalm.]

Let these things be written for another [future] generation; and the people that shall be created shall praise the Lord:

Because He hath looked forth from His high sanctuary, out of heaven hath the Lord beheld the earth.

To hear the groaning of them that are in fetters, to release the children of the slain [*al.*, to loose the sons of death; i.e., those under sentence of death].

That they [i.e., all men, and especially the liberated captives] may declare the name of the Lord in Sion, and His praise in Jerusalem,

When the peoples assemble together, and the kings [*al.*, kingdoms] to serve the Lord.

[The epilogue follows. It is a pathetic appeal that life may not be prematurely cut short; but this has its rise, not in a natural craving for life, but in the longing to see and share in Israel's restoration. He prays that God, to Whom belongs all time, Who Himself sees not corruption,

18. Scribantur hæc in generatione altera, et populus qui creabitur laudabit Dominum.

19. Quia prospexit de excelso sancto suo, Dominus de cælo in terram aspexit;

20. Ut audiret gemitus compeditorum, ut solveret filios interemptorum;

21. Ut annuntient in Sion nomen Domini, et laudem ejus in Jerusalem,

22. In conveniendo populos in unum, et reges ut serviant Domino.

may grant to His servant yet a little portion of the best of gifts.]

23. Respondit ei in via virtutis suæ: [*al.*, afflixit in via fortitudinem meam[1]]: paucitatem dierum meorum nuntia mihi.

He answered him in the way of His strength. Declare unto me the fewness of my days. [Very obscure. Perhaps, 'the psalmist answered God in the day of his robustness and vigour,' or possibly, 'his strength in answering God was after all but weakness.' Probably the true rendering is, 'He hath brought down my strength in the way—i.e., in my life's journey—He hath shortened my days.']

24. Ne revoces me in dimidio dierum meorum; in generationem et generationem anni tui.

[I said] Call me not away in the midst of my days; Thy years [i.e., Thou Whose eternal years] endure throughout all generations.

25. Initio tu, Domine, terram fundasti; et opera manuum tuarum sunt cœli.

In the beginning [*al.*, of old] Thou didst lay the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands.

26. Ipse peribunt, tu autem permanes; et omnes sicut vestimentum veterascent. Et sicut opertorium mutabis eos, et mutabuntur;

They shall perish, but Thou remainest; yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment; and as a vesture Thou shalt change them [*al.*, fold them up] and they shall be changed.

[1] Vers. Heb. Hieron,

But Thou art always the self-same [*al.*, Thou art He], and Thy years shall not fail. [The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes this passage, evidently adopting a Hebrew Messianic tradition, in his argument for the supremacy of Jesus Christ above all creatures. Heb. i, 10-12.]

27. Tu autem idem ipse es, et anni tui non deficient.

The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be directed [*al.*, be established before Thee] for ever.

28. Filii servorum tuorum habitabunt; et semen eorum in sæculum dirigetur.

[Eternal life is the gift of God. The faithful servant of God commits his cause to Him Who made him; and while not grasping with the security of the Christian's faith the full meaning of God's promises for every human soul, yet discerns them dimly, and witnesses to His justice and just ordering of all things, in His mercy perpetuated upon the children because of the faithfulness of their fathers.]

THIS psalm has a twofold glory. It is indeed a prayer of penance; but it is the utterance of one in whom penance has done an almost perfect work; one whose instinctive elevation of spirit enables him, through

the purifying medium of pain and sorrow, to rise above his individual needs and human yearnings in ardent longing for the triumph of God's glory. And, beholding this glory in anticipation, his vision is quickened to discern already the true proportion of things human and Divine, the infinite difference between the created and the Uncreated, the creature and the Creator. Moreover, so Divine is the light that illumines him, that he realises the omnipotence of God to be the certain assurance of His infinite charity. Therefore he makes his appeal with the confidence of a faith that cannot be shaken.

It is probably a psalm of the captivity, written in exile, and in surroundings of physical and mental suffering. The inscription is unique in being descriptive of the psalm. 'The prayer of the poor—i.e., the afflicted or needy—man, when he is anxious—i.e., overwhelmed—and pours out his grief before the Lord.'

The psalm consists of a prologue, vv. 1 and 2; a complaint, vv. 3-11; a consolation, found in the praise of God, which is the soul's only true consolation, vv. 12-22; and an epilogue, vv. 23-28.

Point 1. In this psalm the Holy Ghost teaches us through the progress of penance three kinds of prayer; the unspoken prayer of suffering (which though, perhaps, an unconscious appeal to the Divine compassion, is not the less regarded of God); the spoken prayer of complaint; and the prayer of

praise, resignation and intercession, forming a threefold consolation.

O God, accept my sorrows as my life-long prayer. Let my sufferings plead when my prayer is but an inarticulate cry; when the best years of my life have vanished as smoke, and for all my past I have nothing to show of good done for Thee or for my neighbour; when my affections seem withered and my heart dried up through the heat of life's day, so that through the bitterness of sorrow or the stroke of sudden shock I am hardened, chilled, well-nigh loveless; when the furnace of temptation has scorched me, and the heat of my impulses has burned me out, so that I have, as it were, no life to offer to Thee; when in the weariness of long sickness my bones have cleaved to my skin, and my flesh has been dried up and wasted through fever; when natural pleasures have become so distasteful to me, that I have hardly taken thought to support life; when in loneliness of spirit I have stood apart, weighed down night and day by the cruelty of misunderstanding and persecution, bitterly recalling days past; when life has become to me one long humiliation, bitterness and ashes my bread, and tears my portion to drink; when my days are few, and the chill of death is on me; when those that remain loom long and dreary as the cold evening shadows when the sun is sinking. vv. 3, 4. v. 5. vv. 6, 7, 8. v. 9. v. 11.

O hear me speedily while there is yet time; give me the heart which Thou v. 1, 2.

Inscription. lovest, even the heart of the poor; let me pour out my supplication before Thee; let this be my confession, 'It is Thou Who
v. 10. hast lifted me up and cast me down,' this
vv. 13, 21. my prayer, 'Thy kingdom come, arise and have mercy on Thy Sion; Thy Will be done, in Thine own way, in Thine own time; that
v. 20. Thy praise may be declared in Jerusalem
Gal. iv, 25, 26. which yet sitteth in bondage, and in the free Jerusalem above, Thy Church on earth, in heaven.'

Point 2. The soul that has suffered willingly beneath the hand of God is purified and enlightened; it is made strong to serve Him in praise and intercession. God reveals Himself to it in generous measure, teaching it His own Will for the salvation of man, giving it a portion with the Saints, who in their measure are permitted to share in the glorious vocation of Jesus Christ, as sin-bearers and intercessors for the world.

v. 10. O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou wert lifted up
Wisd. xviii, 16. very high, in Thy Humanity standing upon earth yet reaching unto heaven; and Thou
Matt. xxvi, 39. wert cast down very low; falling on Thy Face in bitterness of spirit; stretched on the ground as the vile rabble nailed Thee to the Cross; laid down by Thy human brethren
vv. 6, 7, 11. within the tomb. The loneliness, the bitterness, the death were Thine; and in Thee our chastisements, our sorrows are become consolation, life, praise.

O Lord, the time of Thy mercy has
v. 13. come; that set time of which Gabriel
Luke i, 31. spoke, saying to her through whom Thy

mercy has come, 'Thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus'; of whom the same Gabriel foretold, saying that sin should have an end, and iniquity be abolished, and everlasting justice be brought on the earth. Thou hast arisen in Thy might, stablishing Thy Church, building her on Peter, her foundations Thy twelve apostles, Thyself still building up her living stones through the patient labour of Thy servants. Already Thou art seen in Thy glory, and Thy memorial is to all generations; for Thy glory and Thy memorial are in the humiliations of Thy love, through the long-suffering of the Holy Ghost, through Thy lowly Presence on the Altar, veiled beneath the form of the lowest gifts of earth.

Dan. ix, 24.

vv. 15, 16.

v. 12.

O Lord, increase Thy glory through the liberty and exaltation of Thy Church. Thou wilt have regard to the prayers of the humble; the petitions of Thy Mother and Thy Saints Thou wilt not despise; make us also humble, that our prayers, our love, may be united with theirs.

v. 14, 17.

Point 3. The illuminated soul sees the triumph of heaven already begun; and in the might of this vision forgets itself, its earthly sorrows, needs, hopes. Its sole desire is for the accomplishment of God's glory. It longs indeed for the regeneration of the human race, for the building up and perfecting of the Church; but only that His greater triumph may be accom-

plished. His Majesty is the centre round which all circles; creation is but a vesture to enhance or to veil the beauty of the uncreated God, the "He Who is" from everlasting to everlasting.

O God, reveal Thyself to us both in Thy power and in Thine unchangeable love. Bring all created things to the fulness of their perfection, and among them us Thy reasonable creatures, that all things may give glory to Thee. For Thou hast looked down from heaven with that compassionate gaze which draws all men unto Thee; Thou hast heard our groans, Thou hast broken the fetters of sin, Thou hast burst the bonds of death and hell; we are no more children of the slain, but Thy free sons. Already Thou bringest in the nations; already the earth owns Thee King of kings.

v. 21.
vv. 19, 20.
vv. 15, 21, 22.

O Lord Jesus Christ, in Thee we learn that love is the true interpretation of life; for Thou art always the Self-same, the uncreated Word, the Babe of Bethlehem, the dying Sufferer; Thou art the Glory of angels and the Friend of sinners. Because Thou art the Lord Who changest not, therefore we, Thy sons, the children of Thy servants, are not consumed. Thou art the Ancient of days, Who art clothed with light as with a garment, Who hast put on majesty and honour; the vastness of creation is but as a vesture with which Thou enfoldest Thyself, and the beginning of created things is to Thee but as yesterday; for from everlasting Thou art; "Thyself un-

v. 27.
v. 20.
Mal. xxiii, 6.
vv. 27, 28.
Ps. ciii, 2.

moved, but moving all the heaven with desire and love."[1] And Thou hast another vesture that Thou puttest not off, a seamless coat which clothes Thee altogether; for Thou hast clothed Thyself with the perishable, that Thou mayest fill it with life eternal; Thy garment of humanity shall not wax old, neither shall it be folded up; because Thou didst once lay it aside in death, that Thou mightest take it again in beauty and strength, and be girded therewith for ever. Therefore Thou hast won for Thyself a long-lived seed; even Thy faithful servants, whose children are made heirs together with them of all things. v. 26. John xix, 24. Ps. xcii, 1, 2. Isa. liii, 10. v. 28.

Lord, make us partakers with Thy Saints. In Thee, with them, we can face life; in Thee, with them, we dare to die; in the unity of Thy Church, secure in the knowledge of Thy Presence with us all days, we can commend into Thy Hands, for Thy pure glory, ourselves, our past and present, our life and death; and not ourselves only, but her children and Thine, for all generations to come. Matt. xxviii, 20. vv. 23, 24.

[1] Dante. Paradiso, Cant. xxiv, 131.

PSALM CXXIX

1. De profundis clamavi ad te Domine;

Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord:

2. Domine, exaudi vocem meam; fiant aures tuæ intendentes, in vocem deprecationis meæ.

Lord, hear my voice. Let Thine ears be attentive to [i.e., listening intently for] the voice of my supplication.

[Out of the waters of the mighty deep; out of the breakers, the whirlpool, the surging current. Out of the dark prison-house of the heart; out of the captivity of the flesh, where the spirit is fast bound as Jonas in the whale's belly; out of the deep of the under-world, where the spirit knoweth its own bitterness, and no stranger intermeddles with it, where God, though ever present, is unattainable; out of the deep of sin, where God is banished while yet He is very nigh, even in the sinner's heart; the sound of prayer, penetrating every medium, forces its way upwards, the voice of entreaty bursts the bonds; the Father of lights

hears every sigh, notes the laboured breathing, ing, is moved by the faint cry.] [The strict perfect tense, "have I cried," is expressive of a prolonged act, a prayer persevered in.]

3. Si iniquitates observaveris Domine: Domine quis sustinebit?

If Thou, Lord, wilt mark [lit., keep; i.e., be on the watch for] iniquities, Lord, who shall stand? [*al.*, who shall abide it?] [Who can face the searching test of God's justice? Is not every conscience self-accused? Does not every man, acquiescing in his own condemnation, echo the cry of Peter, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man'?]

4. Quia apud te propitiatio est; et propter legem tuam sustinui te Domine.

But with Thee there is merciful forgiveness [Thou dost not mark iniquities]; and because of Thy law I have waited for Thee, O Lord.

[Not because of the law given to man does he wait for God, for this law were his condemnation, since 'because it could not give life and grace, it concluded all men under sin'[1]; but because of the law of

[1] Bellarmine.

God's own Nature; of Whom it is written, 'All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth'; 'the law of charity, not the law of justice.'[1] Patristic and scholastic commentators, following the Vulgate, adopt this rendering. Many later students comment on the Hebrew text, which they translate, "For there is mercy with Thee, therefore shalt Thou be feared," or "with Thee is forgiveness, that Thou mayest be feared," meaning that man, beholding God's merciful forgiveness, should be filled with a generous and holy fear of offending Him; and that others, outside the pale, seeing in Israel's restoration a visible proof of Divine pardon, may be drawn to seek the religion of so merciful a God. There is less difference between the two thoughts than appears at first sight. Man waits for God with supreme confidence, because of the immutability of His perfect Law, which is His own unchanging

[1] Saint Augustine.

Charity ; and, beholding that Charity expressed in merciful compassion for the defection of human nature, fears to disobey the Divine law revealed to him, lest he dishonour God and despise His forgiving love.]

5. Sustinuit anima mea in verbo ejus ; speravit anima mea in Domine.

My soul hath relied on His word ; my soul hath hoped in the Lord. [*al.*, my soul waits for the Lord ; in His word, i.e., His repeated promises of deliverance, is my hope.]

6. A custodia matutina usque ad noctem, speret Israel in Domino.

From the morning watch even unto night let Israel hope in the Lord. [*al.*, My soul is unto the Lord more than watchmen for the morning—i.e., with the weary, longing eyes of those who look for the first faint streaks of dawn to tell them that their watch is ended. The allusion is probably to the night-watch of the temple. Cf. 1 Par. ix, 33.]

7. Quia apud Dominum misericordia : et copiosa apud eum redemptio.

For with the Lord there is mercy [i.e., loving kindness. The mercy of God is not an exterior or factitious quality, but the very essence of His Nature], and with Him plentiful re-

demption. [*al.*, deliverance, or setting free; which will surely come, though it seem to tarry many days.]

8. Et ipse redimet Israel ex omnibus iniquitatibus ejus.

And He shall redeem Israel from all His iniquities. [Even Israel, who had sold himself to become a bondsman under sin, shall be redeemed. The Hebrew word used here for "redemption" is of very rare occurrence in the Old Testament. And when it comes it will be no half-hearted thing, but a complete liberation both from the guilt of sin and from its consequences, i.e., from temporal captivity. To a Hebrew no restoration to God's favour would be complete without this twofold deliverance.

Almost without doubt a post-exile psalm. It is an imploring cry of a soul for pardon; of Israel for release from captivity. It witnesses not only to man's deep need and insatiable craving for God, but also to the existence of a union with Him which no distance, no stress, no misery can mar; which nothing can sever save the human will by a deliberate rejection of Him. It is the voice of the true penitent crying for deliverance, in every state, in every

place, whether still in the flesh, or in the world of departed spirits; and therefore the Church has chosen it as her special act of supplication for her holy souls in purgatory, who in the molten furnace of penance are entering into the fulness of the Divine redemption.

Point 1. For the contrite soul, in whatever condition, the suffering and the joy of purgatory have already begun; the suffering of being withheld from the God Who is in its midst, burning yet not consuming it; the joy of knowing that pain and patience are accomplishing their perfect work, hastening the time when, no longer hindered by itself, it shall take swift flight on wings of love, and attain to the fulness of its God.

O Lord, out of the deep have I cried to Thee; out of the deep that hath closed me round about; from the heart of the sea, from the surging waters of my evil passions; from the waves of desolation which Thou hast made to pass over me, that have well-nigh stunned me; from the abyss of my corruption, helplessness, sin; and Thou, O Lord my God, wilt bring forth my soul. v. 1, 2. Jonas ii, 3, ff.

O God, remember me, for I am cast out of the sight of Thine eyes; I am in darkness and in the deep. Though I am so fast in prison that I cannot get forth; though by inherited evil the bars of earth and flesh have shut me up as in a living death; though by my disobedience and my grievous sins hell seem to have devoured

me, yet remember me as Thou didst remember Thy servant Jonas. My soul hopes in Thee and waits for Thee, that I may see
Apoc. xxi, 22. Thy heavenly City and Thy holy Temple, even Thyself, and its eternal Light, even
v. 3. Thy Glory. O Lord, remember me; and in pardoning mercy so mercifully mark mine iniquities now, that in the day of judgment Thou mayest not be extreme to mark them unto condemnation; lest I be not able to stand at Thy bar, but slink away and hide me from Thee for ever.

Set me on fire, O Lord, that love may burn my sinfulness away; infuse into me the spirit of penance, wherein I may suffer gladly; bring me into distress that I may remember Thee, that I forsake not Thee my
v. 8. Mercy; so that redeemed from my iniquities and restored to my heritage, I may praise Thee and sacrifice to Thee for ever.

Point 2. For the contrite soul on earth, as for the holy souls in purgatory, the true spirit of penance is conformity to the Divine Will. Pride, the root of self-will, must be burnt out by love, which sees all things in their true proportions; detachment must be learnt through separation, at least in desire, from the things of sense; the will must be carried captive into the land of liberty, perfected in obedience through contemplating the perfections of the Divine Will, with which it yearns to be in union.

v. 5, 6. O God, not in vain do we wait for Thee, as those who long after a shadow with sickening fear of disappointment; but from

morning watch even till night we hope in Thee, Who never failest them that seek Thee; in the freshness of youth's early faith; in the weary heat of noon; in the dulness of the clouding day, when earth-born vapours hide Thy light; in the confusions of twilight when our eyes see dimly; in the still watches of death's night; in the solitude of purgatory where perhaps heart speaketh not to heart, that Thou mayest be all in all to Thy creatures. For Thou art the strong and living God, to Whom we long with unquenchable thirst, as Thou holdest us in the furnace until Thou hast refined us for Thyself. Give to us supreme patience, entire faithfulness, a hope serene, assured. Burn out of our will all malice; v. 4. 5. 6.
drive far from us the spirit of servile fear, of distrust of Thee, of self-centred despondency. Make our very penance a way to Thee; be our Teacher in suffering that we Heb. v. 8.
may learn obedience; lay us as willing victims on the altar of love, silent and motionless in the peace of wills first surrendered, then conformed, to Love's design; v. 8.
waiting for the redemption of Israel, for Rom. viii. 23.
the perfecting of the Body of Christ.

Point 3. The contrite soul, whether on earth or in purgatory, lovingly recognising God's justice, forgets itself and its sufferings in the contemplation of His love. Herein consist indeed its pain and joy, which are to it as a furnace into which it is plunged, wherein burn vehemently sorrow and desire; whence, when molten together by the action

of the Divine heat that generated them, there rises the pure flame of charity, in which the cleansed and perfected soul mounts up to union with its God.

v. 4. O God, we burn with fear because of Thy mercy, lest we should disappoint Thy love; with longing desire we wait for Thee in our pains and sorrows, because of the v. 7, 8. justice of Thy perfect Law. For with Thee there is loving-kindness and plenteous deliverance; and the more we suffer the more we rejoice, because Thou art the more John iii, 16. our consolation. Thou hast so loved the world as to give Thine only-begotten Son 1 John i, 7. for it; and His Blood cleanses us and restores us to Thee, Whom else we had lost Ephes. v. 16. eternally. Yea, and already the purgatorial fire of love begins to redeem our time, ransoming us even now in our temporal captivity; ridding us of every hindrance that would keep us from Thee; showing us how Thy praise may be accomplished in us through the satisfaction of Thy justice.

Breathe then, O God, upon our little spark of love; quicken it into a glowing fire; burn and refine us till no dross remain in us, till, our whole being kindled with love of Thee,[1] we mount up and find Thee, even as a flame which, darting heavenwards, loses itself, yet is never lost.

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?	What shall I, frail man, be pleading,

[1] Aflame only in the delight of the Spirit.—Dante, *Paradiso,* Canto iii, 52.

Who for me be interceding,
When the just are mercy needing?

Quem patronum rogaturus?
Cum vix justus sit securus.

King of majesty tremendous,
Who dost free salvation send us,
Fount of pity, then befriend us.

Rex tremendæ majestatis,
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,
Salva me, fons pietatis.

Righteous Judge! for sin's pollution
Grant Thy gift of absolution,
Ere that day of retribution.

Juste judex ultionis,
Donum fac remissionis,
Ante diem rationis.

'Jesu! by that shuddering dread which fell on Thee;
Jesu! by that cold dismay which sickened Thee;
Jesu! by that pang of heart which thrilled in Thee;
Jesu! by that mount of sins which crippled Thee;
Jesu! by that sense of guilt which stifled Thee;
Jesu! by that innocence which girdled Thee;
Jesu! by that sanctity which reigned in Thee;
Jesu! by that Godhead which was one with Thee;
Jesu! spare these souls which are so dear to Thee!

Souls who in prison, calm and patient, wait
for Thee;
Hasten, Lord, their hour, and bid them
come to Thee;
To that glorious Home, where they shall
ever gaze on Thee.' [1]

[1] *Dream of Gerontius.*

PSALM CXLII

O Lord, hear my prayer; give ear to my supplication in Thy truth; hear me in Thy justice. [*al.*, In Thy faithfulness, in Thy righteousness, answer me.]

And enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified. [Some texts give 'no living,' i.e., no created thing. Cf. Job iv, 18; xv, 15. The two verses are a strange but blessed combination. The truth and the justice of God are the first ground of appeal; yet man shrinks from the test of that truth and justice applied to his own life. There is no real conflict of idea; for God's truth and justice enfold His love; and man, His son by creation and adoption, pleads every privilege of sonship. Therefore, as one who has confidence before God, he claims a hearing; and when his heart reprehends him, he appeals to his Father's intimate knowledge of His child,

1. Domine, exaudi orationem meam; auribus percipe obsecrationem meam in veritate tua; exaudi me in tua justitia.

2. Et non intres in judicium cum servo tuo, quia non justificabitur in conspectu tuo omnis vivens.

and to His tender and generous compassion.]

3. Quia persecutus est inimicus animam meam, humiliavit in terra vitam meam ;

For the enemy hath persecuted my soul : he hath brought my life down to the ground [i.e., crushed it out].

Collocavit me in obscuris, sicut mortuos sæculi.

He hath made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead. [*al.*, as the ancient dead—the dead of ages past, lost in blackness of darkness, living in no tender memories, utterly forgotten, buried deep down with generations of other dead lying above them. Stronger words could hardly be found to express the depth of the gloom into which the soul has entered ; yet whence it can cry and be heard. Cf. Ps. cxxix, 1.]

4. Et anxiatus est super me spiritus meus; in me turbatum est cor meum.

And my spirit is anguished within me [i.e., faints, or is overwhelmed] ; my heart within me is troubled [i.e., bewildered, amazed. The soul, created in God's image, instinct with His life, its atmosphere His light, is stunned and overwhelmed with bewilderment when it enters the regions of darkness and death, for the en-

vironment is unnatural to it. It is filled with that "fear" which Dante describes when first he enters the under-world. *Inferno*, canto 1, 4 f.f.]

I remembered the days of old, I meditated upon all Thy works, I mused upon the works of Thy hands.

5. Memor fui dierum antiquorum; meditatus sum in omnibus operibus tuis, in factis manuum tuarum meditabar.

I stretched forth my hands unto Thee; my soul is as earth without water unto Thee. [*al.*, my soul gaspeth unto Thee as a thirsty land.] [These two last verses are probably more correctly rendered in the present tense. The thought of the past favour of God is consolation to the anguished soul; for with it comes the realisation that God is the same, and that the change has been in himself. So his musings are the prelude both to prayer and to deliverance.]

6. Expandi manus meas ad te; anima mea sicut terra sine aqua tibi.

Hear me speedily [*al.*, make haste to answer me], O Lord; for my spirit hath fainted away [*al.*, my spirit faileth]. Turn not away [*al.*, hide not] Thy face

7. Velociter exaudi me, Domine; defecit spiritus meus.

Non avertas faciem tuam a me, et similis ero descendentibus

in lacum.

from me, lest [if Thou make as though Thou hearest not] I become like unto them that go down to the pit [i.e., dead in very truth; past hope or recall. The persecution, the bitterness, the deep humiliation he can endure; but not the loss of God.]

8. Auditam fac mihi mane misericordiam tuam, quia in te speravi. Notam fac mihi viam in qua ambulem, quia ad te levavi animam meam.

Cause me to hear Thy mercy betimes in the morning; for in Thee have I hoped [*lit.*, in Thee is my hope]. Make the way known to me, wherein I should walk, for I have lifted [I lift up] my soul to Thee.

9. Eripe me de inimicis meis, Domine, ad te confugi.

Deliver me from mine enemies, O Lord; for unto Thee have I fled. [Who art my hiding-place, my refuge].

10. Doce me facere voluntatem tuam, quia Deus meus es tu. Spiritus tuus bonus deducet me in terram rectam.

Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God. Thy good Spirit shall lead into the right land [*al.*, in a level land, an even way—the way of God's will, simple, direct; where are no precipices, snares or stumbling-blocks].

11. Propter nomen tuum, Domine, vivificabis me; in æquitate tua, educes de

For Thy name's sake, O Lord, Thou wilt quicken me in Thy justice; Thou wilt bring my soul out of

trouble. [Rather, For Thy Name's sake Thou wilt quicken me; in Thy justice Thou wilt bring my soul out of trouble.]

And in Thy mercy Thou wilt destroy mine enemies; and Thou wilt cut off all them that afflict [i.e., harass, or distress] my soul; for I am Thy servant.

tribulatione animam meam;

12. Et in misericordia tua disperdes inimicos meos, et perdes omnes qui tribulant animam meam, quoniam ego servus tuus sum.

The psalm is either Davidic (according to the Vulgate tradition), or is full of the spirit of David, in its realisation of the direness of sin and its insight into the things of God. It is spoken in the shadow of a deep distress; it deals with the effects of sin and its resulting death rather than with sin itself; it is instinct with belief in personality, both good and evil, and triumphant in its conviction of God's power both to deliver, and to maintain the deliverance wrought.

Speaking on this psalm St Augustine gives utterance again to the thought on which he loves to dwell, saying: "The Lord Jesus Christ is both Head and Body. . . . Let us not wonder then in the psalms; for He saith many things in the character of the Head, many in the character of the members; and He so speaketh, as though the whole were one person. Nor wonder thou that there are two in one voice, if there be two in one flesh." So the psalm is both

the cry of the Church to God for deliverance and enlightenment, and the appeal of every individual soul claiming union with the sufferings and the triumph of Jesus Christ; whether, as the psalmist, in imperfect anticipation, or in the accomplished fulness of the Pentecostal gift.

Point 1. Spiritual defeat, unless the subject of speedy prayer, leads to languor, despondency and death. Yet, even in the darkest hour of the soul's failure, God uses the discipline to bring it back to Himself, and thus makes death the gate of life; for He wills that defeat become a great grace, the way to humility and to a more perfect correspondence with His Will. Jesus Christ, Who without sin, is yet made like to us in all things, enduring every horror wrought by sin, made partaker of darkness, desolation, death, makes our complaint His own, in His cry: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me"; "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

v. 2. O God, enter not into judgment with us, nor search too keenly for Thine image in
Is. xliii, 26. us, lest we be found wanting. We have
v. 1. nothing wherewith to justify ourselves; therefore let us put Thee in remembrance,
Is. xliv, 21, 22. Who for Thine own sake blottest out in-
v. 11. iquities, Who by Thine own Name of love pleadest with us that we forget not Thee
v. 12. Who didst form us, Whose servants we are.

v. 1. O God, happy are we if we know our evil case; for had we wholly lost the vision of Thy truth, Thy faithfulness, we should not

have known the death that had come upon us. Blessed are we if we see that an enemy hath done this; blessed for us our anguish, our desolation, our bewilderment of spirit, if our fear make us grope our way back to Thee, our Life, our Light. For with many and persistent assaults has he persecuted us; luring us from Thee by suggestions of discouragement, urging our weakness to yield to his strength, speaking lying words against hope, till he has brought us heavily to the ground in a deadly fall, holding us down and trampling us under his feet with cruel and malignant triumph, while our spirit failed us and life seemed departing. Then were we indeed cut off from Thine Hand, when we hid ourselves from Thee, and from the Saints, Thy friends, and wrapped our darkness round us, and dwelt within the stifling gloom of our despair as in a sepulchre, in the corruption and loneliness of the dead in sin, who, choosing death, have already made the charnel-house their home, and the spirits of death their companions.

v. 3, 4.

Ps. lxxxvii. 5, 6, 7.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou too hast died; Thou knowest the blackness of darkness, and hast tasted the bitterness of sin. Thou wert content to die as one of us, seeming not to be justified in Thy Father's sight; Thou wast persecuted, afflicted, set in dark places and broken in pieces; Thy bleeding Hands were stretched forth towards Thy Father, and as the beatings of Thy sacred Heart grew fainter, Thy Soul gasped to

v. 3, 4.

Lam. iii. 6, 11.

v. 6, 7.

Him, parched with the unquenchable thirst of love. And still we show forth Thy Death, when again and again Thou art mystically
Exod. xvii, 11. slain, stretching forth Thy hands that Thine Israel may overcome, consummated in love
Rom. v, 21; vi, 6. in the Sacrifice of the Altar, that Thou mightest deliver us from the body of this death, that we should no longer serve sin.

Point 2. God, making use of all man's faculties in the process of his restoration, meets the soul, as it were, on its own ground. Secretly He inspires the memory and the intellect, through them recalling to it past seasons of grace and hope springing out of union with Himself; He moves it to dwell on these with wistful regret, at the same time presenting Himself and His works for its contemplation; waiting till such gracious influences shall rouse the will from its lethargy to a mighty effort of prayer and aspiration.

Luke xx, 38. O God, Thou art not the God of the
v. 7. dead, but of the living; and if we live not to Thee we are in death. O save us from the living death of those who go down to the pit, who are cast away in Thy displeasure, hidden for ever from the shining of Thy
Isa. xlix, 9, 10. Face. For Thou art very merciful, and sayest to them that are in darkness and bound with grave-clothes, "Come forth and show yourselves."

O God, raise us up from the death of
Ephes. ii, 6. sloth, of sin, of despair, that we may sit with Thee, even here on earth, in the
v. 5. heavenly places; recall to us the great

things Thou hast done for us already, the joy Thou hast wrought in us in times past; in the purity of our baptismal morning, in the restoring grace of our absolutions, in the renewal of our youth through the strengthening of Confirmation, by inspirations, graces, consolations; through holy impulses born of Thy Spirit in times of silence and withdrawal, when we have shut our doors about us, that we might hear what Thou wouldest speak unto us. v. 10. Ps. lxxxiv. 8, 9.

O God, speak peace to us once more, for our hearts are turned towards Thee; to Thee our arid spirit gasps, longing painfully for the waterbrooks of Thy love; to Thee we stretch forth our bruised and feeble hands, as an infant stretches out his arms to the mother who nourishes him, as a little child ever runs for safety where he hath most confidence.[1] And Thou longest for us to come to Thee that we may have life. We thirst, and Thy delight is to quench our thirst;[2] therefore Thou wilt be our Shepherd, to rule us and lead us and give us drink at the fountains of living waters. v. 6. Ps. xli. 1, 2. John v. 40; x. 10. Apoc. vii. 17.

Point 3. The soul whose cry to God is made in union with the perfect Will of Jesus Christ suffering, is led by the Holy Ghost into the joy of an increasing knowledge of

[1] Dante, *Paradiso,* Canto, xxii, 1; xxiii, 121.

[2] The parched earth loves the rain,
And holy heaven, which is full of rain,
Loves upon earth to fall.
Euripides, Fragment.

God, through union with the perfect Will of Jesus Christ triumphant. The life of such a soul is a continual progress towards God; it lives in the light of His Presence, finds its refuge and protection in His sheltering embrace, its triumph in His faithful service, its delight in being taught of Him, its full development and perfect satisfaction in simple obedience to His Will.

Amos v. 8. O God, turn the shadow of our dark-
v. 10. ness into the morning; enlighten us with the bright beams of Thy holy Spirit, that we
v. 8. may know Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and that knowing the way, we may walk in it with steadfast feet, pressing on in the even path of obedience, wandering into no false tracks through ignorance, not lost in labyrinths of self-love nor stumbling in pitfalls of subterfuges and self-deceits. So shall the wilderness of earth become a fruitful field rich with promise, a land white unto harvest in the triumphs of the Holy Ghost; so shall we be strong in confidence toward
v. 11. Thee, knowing that whoso calls upon the Name of Jesus is quickened, enlightened, supported; so shall we understand Thee
v. 5, 10. more and more in the lifting up of hands and heart by prayer and contemplation; learning obedience to Thy lightest word,
v. 10, 12. Thy every look; joyful to be Thy humblest servants, because we possess Thee for our God.

v. 8. O Lord Jesus Christ, let us make Thy sorrow our sorrow, Thy cry our cry, Thy

obedience our obedience, even unto death. So will the joy of Thy resurrection morning be all our hope, and a message to us of mercy. So shall we dare to claim Thy Gift, the Paraclete; Who shall make Thy Will known to us, shall lead us, quicken us, and bring our soul out of all trouble; for Thy Name's sake, Who art our Jesus; Whose servants we are, and Thou our God and our All.

v. 10.

v. 10, 11, 12.

PSALM CXXXVIII

1. Domine, probasti me, et cognovisti me;

O Lord, Thou hast proved me [*lit.*, searched me out] and known me. [The form of the verb shows the knowledge to be the result of the searching. God needs not, indeed, to search or prove man in order to know him; but He is content that man should speak of Him in terms of human language and apprehend Him by human ways.]

2. Tu cognovisti sessionem meam et resurrectionem meam.

Thou hast known [*al.*, Thou knowest] my sitting down and my rising up.

3. Intellexisti cogitationes meas de longe; semitam meam et funiculum meum investigasti; [*al*, eventilasti[1]].

Thou hast understood [*al*, Thou understandest] my thoughts afar off; my path and my line [*al.*, my couch] Thou hast searched out [*al.*, Thou winnowest.] [The 'line' probably represents a measuring cord, i.e., of moral standard. If the word be 'couch,' as in Jerome and the Hebrew texts, the sense will not be seriously different; man's bed, whether in the natural

[1] Vers. Heb. Hieron.

course of day and night, or at death, being the measure or bound of his time.]

And Thou hast foreseen all my ways; for there is no speech in my tongue.

4. Et omnes vias meas prævidisti, quia non est sermo in lingua mea.

Behold, O Lord, Thou hast known all things, the last and those of old; Thou hast formed me and hast laid Thine hand upon me.

5. Ecce, Domine, tu cognovisti omnia, novissima et antiqua. Tu formasti me, et posuisti super me manum tuam.

[An alternative and probably more correct rendering of these two verses would run, 'Thou art acquainted - familiar — with all my ways; for before a word is yet on my tongue, behold Thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine Hand upon me.']

Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me; it is high, and I cannot reach to it. [*al.*, a knowledge too wonderful for me; too high, I cannot attain unto it.]

6. Mirabilis facta est scientia tua ex me; confortata est, et non potero ad eam.

[The sense of God's omniscience pierces the psalmist and overwhelms him; his words fail. God's knowledge of man's thoughts and words even before

they are his own, the limitations imposed on him by the Divine environing, the strict scrutiny, the testing, keen as though by chemical processes — all these crowd upon his mental vision, and force upon him the conviction, not only of his own littleness, but of God's omnipresence as well as omniscience. If God know all, he argues, He must also be everywhere.]

7. Quo ibo a spiritu tuo? et quo a facie tua fugiam?

Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face?

8. Si ascendero in cælum, tu illic es; si descendero in infernum, ades.

If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell [lit., if I make my bed in Hades] Thou art present.

9. Si sumpsero pennas meas diluculo, et habitavero in extremis maris.

If I take my wings early in the morning [*al.*, if I take the wings of the dawn] and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

10. Etenim illuc manus tua deducet me, et tenebit me dextera tua.

Even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.

11. Et dixi: Forsitan tenebræ conculcabunt me, et nox illuminatio mea in deliciis meis.

If I said: "Perhaps darkness shall cover me and night shall be my light in my pleasures."

But darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be light as the day; the darkness thereof and the light thereof are alike to Thee. [*al.*, and if I say, 'Surely darkness will cover me,' or, 'Only let darkness cover me,' and the light about me be night; even darkness cannot be dark from Thee, but night is light as day; darkness and light to Thee are alike.]

[The spirit, the face, the hand of God represent the different parts of the Divine Nature which it is permitted to man to apprehend. Bellarmine defines the 'spirit' as the 'mind' or 'intelligence' of God. From this supreme Mind man cannot flee, for in common with all creation he both emanates from It and is maintained in existence by It; because all things created are in God, and God in them.

Neither can man hide himself from the Face of God; for to whom God wills He shows Himself; and the being to which He thus manifests Him-

12. Quia tenebræ non obscurabuntur a te, et nox sicut dies illuminabitur; sicut tenebræ ejus, ita et lumen ejus.

self cannot refuse to look upon Him. God has willed to reveal Himself to man, upon whom, by the very virtue of this revelation, the Divine Image is impressed; whose humanity forthwith becomes a mirror which must needs reflect back what it receives.

From the Hand of God man may not loose himself, nor can he shake off Its pressure; but in every influence and circumstance of his life is led and held by It, even as the potter's clay, which, while it seems to be moulded by the wheel on which it suffers, owes every detail of its shaping to the delicate manipulation of the master's guiding fingers. For there can be no darkness to the Spirit which discerns nor to the Intelligence which begets all things. 'God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness.' To Him darkness is as light, and light as darkness, for He transcends the sphere of change. To Him the intricacies of the human spirit offer no

perplexity ; for He is both its fashioner and its interior life. So the psalmist reasons ; saying]

For Thou hast possessed [*al.*, didst create or form] my reins ; Thou hast protected me from [*al.*, didst weave me together in] my mother's womb.

13. Quia tu possedisti renes meos ; suscepisti me de utero matris meæ.

I will praise Thee, for Thou art fearfully magnified [*al.*, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made] ; wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knoweth [it] right well.

14. Confitebor tibi, quia terribiliter magnificatus es ; mirabilia opera tua, et anima mea cognoscit nimis.

My bone is not hidden from Thee, which Thou hast made in secret, and my substance in the lower part of the earth. [*al.*, My frame was not hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought—*lit.*, woven together — in the underworld. The simile is of the weaving of an intricate tapestry.]

15. Non est occultatum os meum a te, quod fecisti in occulto ; et substantia mea in inferioribus terræ.

Thine eyes did see my imperfect being, and in Thy book all shall be written ; days shall be formed, and none in them. [The Vulgate is very obscure. Almost all com-

16. Imperfectum meum viderunt oculi tui, et in libro tuo omnes scribentur. Dies formabuntur, et nemo in eis.

mentators take the passage in Jerome's rendering. Thus it would run, 'Thine eyes did see my substance —*lit.*, the undeveloped germ of me,—and in Thy book they were all written, —i.e., the days which were ordained for me when as yet there was none of them.']

[As while the oaktree is yet folded within the acorn, its Maker knows the number of its boughs and marks its every leaf, notes its kindly influence over bird and beast that shall lodge in its branches and rest under its shade; as He forenumbers the strokes of its felling, and can tell its use in death, so does He know man from the first moment of his being; in His omniscience lay the whole of human history before one living soul was yet created, while the germ of humanity still lay dormant in the womb of earth.]

[And how shall the man in his weakness and guilt make answer before the God Who holds him in the hollow of His Hand? Vain were an attempt to flee His

Presence; as his own nature, it envelopes and fills him; it clings round each fibre of his being, it is the vital energy of his every heart-beat. Shall he sink before God a guilty heap, covering himself with his own rags? Not so; God wills from him nobler things than these. Between them there is an honourable relation; his cry is the cry of friend to friend: 'Have I not hated them that hate Thee?'—the triumphant recognition of a union that even death cannot sever; 'I rose up and am still with Thee.']

17. Mihi autem nimis honorificati sunt amici tui, Deus; nimis confortatus est principatus eorum.

But to me Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable: their principality is exceedingly strengthened. [*al.*, How weighty, or how dear unto me are Thy thoughts, O God, how great is the sum,—*lit.*, sums—[1] of them. The difference between the renderings is more apparent than real. Man is a 'thought' of God, his creation the completion of the Divine counsel, 'let us

[1] The word 'sums' suggests innumerable 'systems' of Divine Thought, emanating in creation after creation.

make man.' God's 'friends' are the saints, by Him beloved and honoured.]

18. Dinumerabo eos, et super arenam multiplicabuntur. Exurrexi, et adhuc sum tecum.

I will number them, and they shall be multiplied above the sand. [cf. Heb. xi, 12 ff.] I rose up and am still with Thee. [*al.*, When I awake, I am still with Thee.] [A transition from the general to the individual, striking in its abruptness; as though the psalmist rejoiced to assure God and himself that no grain of sand should be forgotten in the multitude; no single soul miss its vocation of union with Him by virtue of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.]

19. Si occideris, Deus, peccatores, viri sanguinum, declinate a me;

If Thou wilt kill the wicked, O God; ye men of blood, depart from me:

20. Quia dicitis in cogitatione: accipient in vanitate civitates tuas.

Because you say in thought; 'They shall receive Thy cities in vain' [i.e., God will not be as good as His word, neither are His rewards worth the having.] [*al.*, O that Thou wouldest, or, Surely Thou wilt, slay the wicked, O God; and that men of blood might depart from me,—who defy Thee and

take Thy Name in vain.] [Man's union with God involves the making of a common cause with Him against evil; a longing for its annihilation, and for the union of all wills with His Will.]

Have I not hated them, O Lord, that hated Thee, and pined away because of Thine enemies [*lit.*, because of them that resist Thee.]

21. Nonne qui oderunt te, Domine, oderam? et super inimicos tuos tabescebam?

I have hated them with a perfect [*lit.*, utter] hatred, and they are become enemies to me. [*lit.*, I count them mine own enemies.]

22. Perfecto odio oderam illos, et inimici facti sunt mihi.

[Then, moved by an impulse of holy fear, the psalmist seems to dread lest he too may unknowingly be ranged on the side of God's foes; and, rather than risk so great an ill, he will subject himself to God's scathing scrutiny. Therefore he cries out;]

Prove me O God [*lit.*, search, or try me], and know my heart [*lit.*, make it Thy task to know it through and through;] examine me, and know my paths [i.e., the ways of my thoughts.]

23. Proba me, Deus, et scito cor meum; interroga me, et cognosce semitas meas.

And see if there be in

24. Et vide si via

iniquitatis in me est; et deduc me in via æterna.

me the way of iniquity [*al.*, any way of grief], and lead me in the eternal way.

THIS psalm was probably composed after the return from captivity, in the fervour of penance inspired by chastisement and deliverance, the outburst of righteous indignation against the 'wicked' referring in the first instance to the proud nations who, by rising up against the Lord's people, were, as seen by the enlightened vision of the psalmist, rebelling against the Lord Himself.

Many commentators, Saint Augustine, Venerable Bede and Bellarmine included, interpret the psalm, in whole or part, mystically, of Jesus Christ or of His Body the Church; and the Church herself applies it in the same way to the Resurrection of her Lord in her Easter Mass, and also in the Mass of Saint Andrew, first of the "friends" of Jesus Christ, with whose honour she begins her year. The psalm contains in itself a whole system of philosophy. It witnesses to man's unfaltering conviction of his power to combine belief in his own free-will with acute consciousness of the Divine limitations that enclose him on every side; and also of the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit within him to draw him to God by the humbling force of contrast, as he compares God's greatness with his own littleness.

vv. 1-12. **Point 1.** God's Omniscience and Omnipresence lay upon man an urgent responsi-

bility, that, since he cannot escape, he assure himself of his safety; and they also reveal to him that this way of his justification lies in the knowledge of his own heart.

For if all things be naked and open to the eyes of God, let man see to it that he harbour no evil thing without him or within; if God be round about him and within him, so that he cannot choose but be the vessel of the Divine Presence, he must prove himself and search what metal he is of, lest the ardent heat of the indwelling Fire burn out his thin places, and he be cast away as useless. If God know his sitting down and rising up, happy for him if the knowledge be unto favour and not unto death; if with the austere line of His moral rectitude God measure him, woe be to him if he fall short; if God be his Winnower, let him beware lest he be all chaff.

O God, Thou hast searched me out and known me, for Thou art Maker of all things, Who fillest heaven and earth. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it; save me lest it be unto me a consuming fire and I perish. And since I cannot depart from Thee, let me depart from myself, and from the condemnation which I have brought upon me. v. 1. Jer. xxiii. 26. v. 6.

O God, teach me Thyself, for I would know myself. 'With Thee there is no place; but Thou, O Truth, dost everywhere watch over all that consult Thee, and dost clearly answer them.' [1] Teach me to search

[1] Saint Augustine.

v. 1. myself that I may find Thee everywhere within me, in the downsitting of my thoughts and the uprising of my actions; turn me that I may look at Thee, and by Thee interpret me to myself.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou knowest us with a double knowledge; for Thou didst both make us and wast made like unto us.

v. 3, 23. By Thee we are doubly judged; as God Thou provest us even now and wilt prove us hereafter; and Thy human Character is the line from which we may not depart; by which Thou dost measure us, and our only true measure of ourselves.

Matt. ix, 4. O Lord, Thou knowest our thoughts,
Acts xvii, 28. for in Thee we live and move and are;
Gen. viii, 21. and Thou seest that every imagination of man's heart is prone to evil from
John xi, 33. his youth; in Thy human Spirit Thou hast groaned, and Thou hast been sorrowful unto death because of the evil that men have had in their hearts. Thou knowest our words, for Thou dwellest in the mind that begets them; and Thou art also the
John vi, 63. very Word Incarnate, Whose human words are spirit and life. O God, our words have become insufferable to Thee; their deceit and presumption have wearied Thee; Thy words we have treated as of no account, and have disregarded Thy warning that for
Matt. xii, 36. every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account in the day of judgment.

O Way most pure and undefiled, our ways Thou knowest, their foolishness, their wilfulness, their wantonness; for we have

departed from the eternal way, and have chosen the way of iniquity and of grief that leads to destruction. v. 24. v. 20.

Where then shall I find refuge? Whither shall I flee from Thy Presence? Shall I hide myself as Adam in the thicket and clothe myself with skins that Thou see not my nakedness? Shall I rove the earth as Cain, haunted by the fear of Thy Face? Shall I flee to the uttermost parts of the sea as Jonas, or as Judas think to escape from Thee by flying from myself? v. 7. Gen. iii. 7, 8. Gen. iv. 14. Jonas i. 3. v. 9. Matt. xxvii. 5.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I am ever before Thee; for with Thee there is no darkness at all; in uncreated time Thou didst behold me, in my mother's womb Thine eyes beheld my substance; when the sun's face was veiled in the thick night of Calvary, I was present to Thee as though none else were there; Thy burning light smote upon me, and lit up every dim recess of my being. v. 11, 12.

O Lord, have I not cause to tremble? Hast Thou not seen all my ways by night and day, and searched them out; my mean ways, my pleasure-loving ways, my unrestrained ways, my secret evil ways? v. 2, 3.

Has not every word in my tongue been known to Thee before my lips had formed it, every thought laid open to Thee before I knew it mine? How is it then that such memories rise up before me, of dark thoughts and lawless longings, envious and malicious, revengeful and despairing; of evil words angry, untrue, slanderous, of idle words vain and disedifying? v. 4.

v. 19, 20. O God, wilt Thou not slay the wicked?
Ez. xii, 25. Hast Thou not said it, and wilt Thou not do
Apoc. vi, 16. it? Have I not need to call upon the mountains and the rocks to fall upon me and to hide me from Thy Face and from Thy wrath?

vv. 13-16. **Point 2.** The same Divine Omniscience and Omnipresence that are to man judgment and a source of fear, are also his hope, and the means whereby he may attain self-knowledge. For God dwells in creation, not to its destruction, but to its life; and His knowledge of it is the love that upholds it.

So also God dwells in man to be his life; and if his life, his light also. The moral law that binds him is no arbitrary command, but God within him vindicating His holiness. Man's self-knowledge is God's truth triumphantly asserting itself; his sense of sin is his confirmation of God's protest within him, and his implicit acknowledgement of God's right over him.

His conscience is God's Reflection in him made visible by the action of Divine light, and developed by the communication of Divine knowledge. So, in proportion as man is filled with God, his shallowness will become God's depth, his falseness will give place to God's truth; curiosity will have no room for self-analysis, nor vanity for trifling; for all will be tested by the Divine standard, and by the indwelling of Justice true proportions will be maintained.

v. 14. O God, wonderful are Thy works and

very high is Thy knowledge; and the wisdom of Thy love is life not death, our hope and not our fear. v. 15, 16, 17.

Therefore I need not flee from Thee, but will come before Thee and will not delay; that Thou may justify and not condemn me. Look upon me and weigh me in a just balance, who am but earth and the child of earth, moulded by Thee, possessed by Thee, impelled and restrained by Thy Hand; conceived when Thou wilt, filling the place Thou choosest, perishing at Thy Word; foolish and ignorant as a babe or a dumb creature. Job xxxi. 6. v. 15.

O my God, I thank and praise Thee that Thou hast made me and not I myself. For because I am but nothingness, Thou art my All; because Thou hast fashioned me before and behind, there can be no room found within me for vain pride of life. For Thou hast laid Thine Hand upon me, and knowest me altogether, and for Thine own use Thou hast made me; my body with its mingled activities and powers of suffering; my mind with the intelligence that inspires and the limitations that enclose it; my soul with its capacity to choose between good and ill; wherein Thou willest to make Thy habitation. Ps. xcix. 3. v. 5, 15.

O God, have other guests been harboured in the place which Thou madest for Thyself, so that Thou wert driven out, unable to abide in such foul company? Have body, mind, and soul, Thine by every right, made shameless partnership in evil,

that foul deeds and fouler thoughts should hold guilty converse together within Thy Temple?

Lord, have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me; let Thy knowledge be my hope and my deliverance. Again and again Thou returnest, and never wholly leavest me;[1] bearing with my infidelities and inconsistencies and ignorances; rebuking, pleading, convincing.

Amos ix, 3, 4. O God, set Thine eyes upon us for good and not for evil. Light us up, O Sun of Justice, lest we turn to mould and rottenness v. 8. in the dark. Bring us out of the hell of despair; save us from climbing up to heaven in presumption; search us and take us out of the heights, even though they be of Carmel, if clouds of self begin to gather round us or mists of deceits to enfold us, and contemplation become to us a hidden snare. Do all this and more unto us, so it Ps. cxxxiii, 5, 7, 8. be in mercy and not in wrath. But in the humility of Thy Spirit lead us from virtue to virtue, ascending step by step in the place where Thou hast set us, until in Sion we behold Thee and dwell in Thy house for ever.

v v. 17-22. **Point 3.** If man's self-knowledge be neither the making of scientific discoveries in regard to himself by analytical processes, nor a morbid self-dissection born of self-love, but the manifestation of God within him, it will produce in him hatred of evil and a desire for union with God and communion with His Saints. This union

[1] Saint Augustine.

will be realised through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost moving and acting in the whole Church and in her individual members, and through her upon the world at large.

By virtue of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost man receives grace to know God and therefore himself; to slay falsehood by the power of truth, to shame the rebellion of pride by the loveliness of humility, to gain life, even though it be at the cost of death.

For the created Nature of Jesus Christ was the flawless reflection of the beauty of the Godhead, and His human Conscience the exact correspondence with Its perfect law. By His death He brought forth life; for He sent the Spirit of Truth, the Illuminator, Who abides upon earth to convince the world of sin and of justice and of judgment; to teach the Church all truth; to lead every humble soul in the eternal way.

O God, wonderful are Thy ways, very deep Thy thoughts. Thou hast cast us in Thine own image; children of earth, we are also sons of God; Thou admittest us to Thy secrets, willing us to know Thy counsels and love them. v. 14. v. 17.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Thyself art the perfect Counsel of the Father, and the saints are Thy glorious Thoughts; begotten by Thee in the charity of Thine Heart, predestined for Thyself before all time.

Throned and crowned above all created beings is Thine Immaculate Mother, Virgin unsullied, who brought forth the King;

neither before nor henceforth hath there been or shall there be such another.[1]

Great above all Thy princes is Peter; to whom Thou hast given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, saying to him: "Occupy till I come." Great are Thine apostles, exceeding strong their principality; who sit on thrones and wield for Thee the sword of judgment.

v. 18. Very honourable are all Thy Saints in heaven and on earth, whose prayers have power to move even the will of God; who are as the stars of heaven in multitude, as the sand-grains on the shore innumerable. These were heroic in the faith that moves mountains, the hope that quails not, the love that never counts the cost. Thou didst

v. 23, 24. prove and try them as by fire, and didst lead them in the rough way of mortification. And in them there is found no way of iniquity, because they have been healed by Thine indwelling; Thy downsitting and Thine uprising are their salvation; in their awakening they are present with Thee, for them death is swallowed up in victory by the triumph of Thy death.

John viii, 32. These all were made free by Thee the Truth, to choose Thee who art truth; and

v. 5. their earthly limitations became to them a glory, the renewal of their choice, the consecration of their sacrifice.

v. 21. O God, to me too Thou hast given the power to choose; to have part and lot with Thy saints, to love Thee, to hate Thine

[1] Lauds, 2nd Antiphon, Christmas Day.

enemies, to be increasingly present with Thee by the awakening of my faculties in Thy love; or to take part with Thine enemies, with the unbelieving, the fearful, with those who hate Thee. v. 20. Apoc. xxi. 8.

O my God, to Thee I pay my vows; Thou hast chosen me; can I choose aught but Thee?

Oh, make me hate Thine enemies with a perfect hatred; not a thing of words, but a horror, a dread. Make me strong to rebuke evil, to defy those who defy Thee and take Thy Name in vain by slandering Thy Saints and disparaging Thy holy poor. Make me fervent in prayer for their conversion; grant me to hate their sin, which is Thine enemy; to long for their salvation, because Thy thoughts and Thy creations are dear to me. v. 22.

O God the Holy Ghost, Fire enlightening and not burning, seek the ground of my heart; prove me and look well if there be any way of iniquity in me, any secret compromise with Thy foes. Preserve me from subtle hypocrisies, from formalism, from every vacillation or inconsistency whereby Thy Name is taken in vain. Hold me up to the light that I may see myself; be the Light which shall search me through and through; let no subterfuge deceive me, no snare entangle me, lest unawares I tread a way of grief and Thy love be disappointed. Lead me through the wilderness and through the sea; by the way of the Cross and the v. 23, 24. v. 19, 20. v. 24. v. v. 7-10.

valley of deadly shade; by Jesus Christ,
Is. lii, 23. who laid His Body on the ground as a way to them that went over; by Thyself,
Is. xxxv, 8. the straight and holy Way which the unclean shall not tread, but in which no simple wayfarer shall err. For Thou art the Father of the poor, the Consoler of the afflicted, the Vision of the clean of
Ps. lxvii, 29. heart; Thou wilt renew the face of the earth and confirm that which Thou hast wrought; Thou wilt fill the hearts of Thy
v. v. 13, 19. faithful with understanding, so that though for a while they abide among Thy foes
Ps. lxvii, 14. and sleep in the lots of earth, they shall presently be as the wings of a Dove that are covered with silver and glorious with the paleness of gold.

The Spirit came into the Church
With His unfailing power,
He is the Living Heart that beats
Within her at this hour.

* * * *

Ah! see how like the Incarnate Word,
His Blessed Self He lowers,
To dwell with us invisibly,
And make His riches ours.

Most tender Spirit! Mighty God!
Sweet must Thy Presence be,
If loss of Jesus can be gain,
So long as we have Thee!

F. Faber.

PSALM CII

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless His holy name.

1. Benedic, anima mea, Domino, et omnia quæ intra me [*al.*, omnia viscera mea][1] sunt nomini sancto ejus.

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and never forget all that He hath done for thee [*al.*, all His benefits].

2. Benedic, anima mea, Domino, et noli oblivisci omnes retributiones ejus;

[Man's only true praise of God is the oblation of his entire being. To this must tend every faculty, every impulse conscious or unconscious, every hidden movement of heart and will—the 'omnia viscera mea' of Jerome's rendering—all summed up in the soul or 'ego,' the reflexive personality. The man himself is to be his own life-long act of worship.

Further, the threefold Name of Love must be his inspiration, and his praise a deliberate act of gratitude; not as the beasts, who indeed praise

[1] Vers. Heb. Hieron.

God unconsciously by their existence, but through knowledge of sonship, in life received, in substance shared. So, lest by forgetfulness he sink to the level of the unreflective brute, there sounds in his ears the warning note, 'Forget not all His benefits.']

3. Qui propitiatur omnibus iniquitatibus tuis, qui sanat omnes infirmitates tuas;

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases; [primarily, here, of the body, but also of the soul; for the doing of the lesser is a sign and assurance of the power to accomplish the greater—'That you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, He saith to the sick of the palsy, I say to thee, Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house.']

4. Qui redimit de interitu vitam tuam, qui coronat te in misericordia et miserationibus;

Who redeemeth [*al.*, releaseth] thy life from destruction [*al.*, the pit, i.e., 'Gehenna,' which is death, the grave, the underworld]; who crowneth thee with mercy [*al.*, with kindness] and compassion;

5. Qui replet in bonis desiderium tuum; renovabitur ut aquilæ juventus tua.

Who satisfieth thy desire [*al.*, thy soul; i.e., all thy human needs and yearnings] with good things;

[so that] thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's.

[Various legends cluster round the eagle, but the substance of them is the same. The height and strength of its flight, its keenness of vision, its periodical renewing of plumage and strength even in old age, have constantly suggested to spiritual writers the renewal of the soul by grace. Youth is life full of promise ; the soul that mounts up on strong wings of prayer with gaze fixed on God renews its youth ; for it becomes a sharer in the infinite possibilities of eternal life. Cf. Isa. xl, 31 ; Prov. xxx, 19 ; Job xxxix, 27 ff.]

The next eleven verses contain the main body of the psalm. God's revelation of Himself in a covenant of love with His elect people both results from and also manifests His infinite Charity. Under this blessed dispensation the disorder caused by sin is rectified, confusions are adjusted, disasters repaired; human weakness and the

universal law of death take their places in the fulfilment of God's design; even sin is brought into the Divine service. All become mediums of His love, all bear their witness to the height and depth of His fatherly compassion.]

6. Faciens misericordias Dominus, et judicium omnibus injuriam patientibus.

The Lord doth mercies [*al.*, executeth righteous acts] and judgment [*lit.*, judgments] for all that suffer wrong [i.e., that are oppressed].

7. Notas fecit vias suas Moysi, filiis Israel voluntates suas.

He hath made His ways known to Moses, His wills [*al.*, His doings or exploits] to the children of Israel.

[The thought of God as the just and merciful judge, executing judgment without procrastination or partiality, espousing the cause of the weak and bringing their suit to a triumphant issue, would appeal forcibly to the imagination of the Hebrews, who both writhed under the frequent oppression and extortion of corrupt local magistrates, and also habitually suffered from the dilatoriness and slothful injustice which even up to the

present day characterise Eastern courts of law.]

The Lord is compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy [*lit.*, in loving kindness].

8. Miserator et misericors Dominus ; longanimis et multum misericors.

['He is filled with fatherly love towards His faithful sons ; justifying them by things natural and spiritual ; bearing with their waywardness, their sins, their infirmities and evil tendencies ; crowning them with glory.'[1]]

He will not always be angry [*lit.*, contend], nor will He threaten [*al.*, keep His anger, *lit.*, bear a grudge] for ever.

9. Non in perpetuum irascetur, neque in æternum comminabitur.

[The verse refers, as does the entire psalm, to God's dealings with men of good will in their temporal chastisement, and cannot be regarded as bearing on the condition of the impenitent.]

[So far the theme has been of God's goodness in general ; the psalmist now turns to the consideration of the individual experience of himself and his brethren.]

[1] Bellarmine.

10. Non secundum peccata nostra fecit nobis, neque secundum iniquitates nostras retribuit nobis.

He hath not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded [requited] us according to our iniquities.

11. Quoniam secundum altitudinem cæli a terra, corroboravit misericordiam suam super timentes se ;

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so hath He strengthened His mercy towards them that fear Him [*al.*, so mighty is His kindness over them that fear Him].

['Men sin beneath heaven, yet they are covered by heaven ; thence is light for the eyes, thence air, thence breath, thence all mercy. And if thou art scourged, and conceivest that God hath forsaken thee—God hath forsaken thee, if the protection of heaven hath forsaken the earth.'][1]

12. Quantum distat ortus ab occidente, longe fecit a nobis iniquitates nostras.

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our iniquities from us.

[Man knows the mightiest act of God's kindness to be the forgiveness of sins. This knowledge involves the sense of his own corruption, and also, because he sees it to require so vast an exercise of

[1] Saint Augustine.

Divine Compassion, the appreciation of the heinousness of moral obliquity. No Christian penitent, no cleansed soul rejoicing in the justifying power of the Sacraments, could use stronger words to express his conviction of forgiveness; nor could any imagery be sublimer than that of the Hebrew poet. The stern sentence had gone forth: 'All souls are Mine; the soul that sinneth, the same shall die.' Ezec. xviii, 4.

But though the word of the Lord changes not, the power of Jesus Christ prevails over time and space, and through Him the triumphant note rings out over ages past and future: 'Nay, for as far as the east is from the west hath He set our sins from us; we shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord.']

13. Quomodo miseretur pater filiorum, misertus est Dominus timentibus se.

As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him. [God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The Father's Heart is compassionated

by His child's weakness, the shortness of his day, and his swift passage into darkness.]

14. Quoniam ipse cognovit figmentum nostrum; recordatus est quoniam pulvis sumus.

For He knoweth our frame [*lit.*, our moulding, or fashioning. The 'figmentum nostrum' of the Vulgate should rather be translated 'our weakness.' Cf. Job x, 8.]

He remembereth that we are dust. [The expression is rather, 'He bethinks Him,' as a kind parent looks about to discover a excuse for childish inconsequence or folly.]

15. Homo, sicut fœnum dies ejus; tanquam flos agri sic efflorebit:

Man's days are as grass; as the flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

16. Quoniam spiritus pertransibit in illo, et non subsistet; et non cognoscet amplius locum suum.

For the spirit shall pass in him and he shall not be, and he shall know his place no more. [In the Vulgate the latter half of the verse fails to carry on the melancholy beauty of the simile; it should rather read, 'For a wind passes over it and it is gone.']

[How then shall this stern unalterable law of death be reconciled with the gracious promises of

God; with the renewal of youth, the compassionate cleansing? The next words give the answer. By two wills indissolubly welded together the mystery shall be solved. God loves, man must fear in the spirit of filial obedience. By loving submission to death he triumphs over death, for love is the secret of life.]

But the mercy [kindness] of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear Him, and His justice unto children's children.

17. Misericordia autem Domini ab æterno, et usque in æternum super timentes eum, et justitia illius in filios filiorum,

To such as keep His covenant, and are mindful of His precepts to do them.

18. His qui servant testamentum ejus, et memores sunt mandatorum ipsius ad faciendum ea.

[The duty of man is to maintain the covenant both by himself keeping God's Law and the deposit of faith, 'being mindful of His precepts to do them;' and by handing them on untampered with and unimpaired. 'If he trifle with God's truth, he injures posterity.'[1] So the loyalty of each generation assures to the next one the

[1] Cardinal Newman.

continuance of God's blessing; or, conversely, risks for it a portion of loss. For God wills the manifestation of His 'kindness' to men to be in great measure the result of their obedience and faithfulness. Development, both economic and spiritual, progresses, in the nation as in the individual, in proportion to obedience to Divinely-established law.

This verse is the counterpart of v. 2: 'forget not His benefits'; 'be mindful to do His precepts.' Gratitude to God is real just so far as it results in obedience to His Will.]

19. Dominus in cælo paravit sedem suam, et regnum ipsius omnibus dominabitur.

The Lord hath prepared [*al.*, established] His throne in heaven; and His kingdom shall rule [*al.*, ruleth] over all.

[From the consideration of God's Charity manifested towards man, the psalmist has passed on to the contemplation of the universality of His power. Then, as though shamed by the sense of man's misery, his failure to excel, and the difference between his aspira-

tion and his attainment, he turns with relief to beings higher, nobler, more perfectly poised, and calls upon them by their worthy praise to supply his deficiency. And in this desire for the pure glory of God, he has a foretaste of heaven, where none desires a higher place than that assigned to him, but rejoices that others should be nearer to God than himself.[1]

Bless the Lord, all ye His angels; ye that are mighty in strength [*lit.*, strong warriors or heroes.] and fulfil His commandment, hearkening unto the voice of His word, [i.e., hearkening in readiness to execute the orders instantly.]

20. Benedicite Domino, omnes angeli ejus, potentes virtute, facientes verbum illius, ad audiendam vocem sermonum ejus.

Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts, ye ministers of His that do His word. [The hosts are of warriors, as in the preceding verse. The thought of conflict is

21. Benedicite Domino, omnes virtutes ejus, ministri ejus, qui facitis voluntatem ejus.

[1] The quality of love stilleth our will, and maketh us long only for what we have, and giveth us no other thirst. For did we desire to be more aloft, our longings were discordant from His will, who here assorteth us. . . . And His will is our peace.—Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto iii, 70ff.

evidently present to the psalmist.]

22. Benedicite Domino, omnia opera ejus, in omni loco dominationis ejus.

Benedic, anima mea, Domino.

Bless the Lord all ye His works: in every place of His dominion bless the Lord, O my soul. [The soul that is filled with the desire of God's glory seeks it and finds it everywhere. For in God it has all rights: wherever He is, it has a share. 'All are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's.' In its own deeps it praises Him more truly than in any other sphere; for it knows its bond with Him as it can know nothing else.]

THIS psalm is an outpouring of gratitude for mercies vouchsafed to the individual soul under God's covenant of love in the ancient Dispensation; renewed and vitalised in the Catholic Church, through the Incarnation.

Strong tradition ascribes the psalm to David, who himself had so deeply realised the joy of pardon and restoration. The Church places it on the lips of her priests for recital in their office of thanksgiving after Mass; and every grateful soul may find in it a voice of praise for the healing of absolution; of thanks for the Eucharistic gift whereby the desire of the human heart is

'satisfied with good things,' even with Jesus Christ Himself.

Point 1. The benefits of God to man—'retributiones,' the fiery revenge of Divine charity for man's evil towards Him—are not mere exterior acts of beneficence, but spiritual graces infused into his nature; the Divine counterpart of the dutiful response made by the human will, as, in obedience to the leadings of the Holy Ghost, it treads the way of penance and sanctification.

Man, because he is God's creature, is intimately comprehended of Him; and as a father educates his child by progressive stages, so God's Hand is on His man—forgiving, healing, redeeming, crowning, satisfying him, through interior re-creative processes.

The Divine forgiveness is not the mere pronouncement of pardon, nor is redemption from death but the recalling of a fiat; they are rather the breathing into man the Spirit of life, and the turning and recasting of his own will; his healing is not only the elimination of the virus of sin, but also the restoration of spiritual health by the activity of every function and the strengthening of the whole constitution; his crowning is not an outward mark of Divine approbation, but the ardent Charity of God permeating His creature, so that the whole being becomes luminous through His glory within it, and the halo of sanctity circles round it by reason of its interior

light. Then, when all else has been accomplished, God, sole End of creation, satisfies with Himself the man whom with Himself He has re-created ; and in exact proportion to man's vital capacity—i.e., the simplicity and purity of his will, infuses into him
John xvii, 3. eternal life, which is the knowledge of
Apoc. xxii. Himself ; and this water of life freely given is the elixir of youth whereby man is renewed in the image of God, and becomes like to Him Whose years fail not, but endure throughout all generations.

v. 1. We praise Thee O God, we acknowledge
Deut. x, 20, 21 ; xi, 1. Thee to be the Lord. Thou, O God, art our praise and our God ; Thee only will we serve with our heart and soul and all that is within us. We praise and thank Thee
Gen. xlix. 25. for Thy benefits to all mankind ; for all blessings of the natural order, of heaven above and of the deep that lieth beneath.
v. 8, 11, 13. For Thou art our Father, compassionate and merciful, Who hast strengthened Thy mercy upon us as the heaven is high upon the earth.

v. 2. And because, O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art our praise, we are also Thy praise and Thy glory ; for great things hast Thou done for us, and great wonders hast Thou wrought in Thy Church.

v. 3. Hast Thou not brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and set us in the land of promise, and built for us a holy city wherein Thou dwellest with us ?

v. 3. Hast Thou not forgiven us all our iniquities, renewing us in Baptism, freeing us by

Thine absolving Touch as often as we have forged new fetters round ourselves, binding up our wounds, leaving in the ministries of Thy Church all that we need for healing?

Hast Thou not redeemed us by Thy Cross, and tasted the bitterness of death to release us from death? v. 4.

Yea, and again and again Thou comest down to the underworld of our meanness and corruption, to be our Protector and Deliverer; to drive back the assaults of malicious spirits, to beat off from us the noisome things of darkness, evil thoughts and pale fears that flit around, confusions and scruples that would eat away our life. Dost Thou not tear off the grave-clothes of our foulness that we have wound around ourselves, and Thyself bear us up into the free air of hope, into the light of love? v. 4

Hast Thou not satisfied us a hundredfold in the Sacrament of Thy Love, giving us no less a gift than Thyself? For Thou, Who madest us for Thyself, knowest our emptiness and the hungriness of our desire, and it pitied Thee to see us feed on husks whom Thou willest should share the plenty of Thy Father's house. O Lord, we are not worthy of the crumbs that fall from the table; yet Thou feedest us with the Bread of Angels, the Corn of the elect, and givest us to drink Wine springing forth virgins. v. 5. Ps. lxxvii, 25. Zech. ix, 17.

Yea, with mercy and kindness Thou dost crown the lowliest of Thy children, making us in Thy Church a kingly priesthood, a purchased people, called out of darkness v. 4. 1 Peter ii, 9.

into light, encircled by Thy love. Thy
Ex. xxviii, 38, 41. priests Thou dost consecrate and sanctify,
writing Thy Majesty upon the diadem of
Wis. xviii, 24. their head; and Thy Saints are crowned
with everlasting honour, because in them
Thou showest Thy brightness to everyone
under heaven. But more glorious than all
hast Thou created her, the Mother of God,
Mother of us, out of whom arose the Sun of
Wis. vii, 25, 26, 29. justice. For into her no defiled thing could
come, who is a pure emanation of Thy glory,
the unspotted mirror of Thy Majesty, the
image of Thy Goodness. She is more beauti-
ful than the sun, and above all the order of
the stars; for Thou hast crowned her with
Apoc. xii, 1. Thine own glory, and hast set twelve stars
as a diadem about her head, that she may
Ps. cxii, 8. be in the midst among the princes of Thy
people.

v. 2 O Lord, how can we forget? Yet how often have we not forgotten? Rather must we say, How shall we, children of the hour, remember, unless Thou remind us; unless Thou be our very life within us, quickening our memory, deepening our love?

Ps. lxxvii, 12, 17. O save us from the condemnation of Thine ancient people, who forgot Thy benefits and believed not Thy wondrous works, and added yet more sin against Thee.

Preserve us from forgetfulness in every form; from the pride and conceit which feeding on themselves have no thought for Thee; from the sullenness and despair that will not remember unto hope; from

the idleness that forgets to pray and the trifling that wastes Thy gifts. Preserve us most of all from the hypocrisy of the heart that remembering Thee is not right with Thee, nor faithful to Thy covenant; of a mouth that loves Thee and a tongue that lies to Thee. But be Thou secretly in our tabernacle, our Brightness within and around us; give back to us our fervour and the love of our espousals; so shall our youth be renewed. Then shall we not desire earthly wreaths, the praise of man or our own self-gratulation; then shall we not fear to share Thy crown of thorns. So, in Thy covenant of love, Thou wilt crown us, washing and cleansing and anointing us, making us perfect through the beauty which Thou hast put on us, Thyself our purity and the assurance of our victory.

Ps. lxxvii, 35, 36, 37. Job xxix, 4 ff. Bar. v, 3. v. 5. v. 4. vv. 6-13. Apoc. iv, 4.

Point 2. The soul that God has restored through His 'benefits,' of renewal, of cleansing, and of satisfying, rejoices to honour Him in the dutiful service that is the glory of Angels and men. For man, made 'a little lower than the angels,'—'paulo minus ab angelis,'—shares with the Angelic Orders the power of projecting his mental vision outwards and inwards: outwards upon creation where he beholds God present, and to which, like the Angels, he receives from Him a ministry; inwards upon his own spirit, wherein he beholds the Divine image. Like Gabriel he can say in the joy of intelligent consciousness: 'I am he that stands before God, and am sent.'

Luke i, 19.

Matt. xx, 28. Like Jesus Christ the Son of man, Who came to give His life a redemption for
John iv, 34. many, he dares to say: 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me,' and with Him
Ps. xxii, 4. to walk in the midst of the shadow of death;
v. 17. knowing, with an assurance that cannot be shaken, that the mercy of the Lord is upon him from eternity unto eternity.

v. 7. O God, we are Thy children; teach us Thy ways. Behold, Thou showest us Thy mighty acts and the great things Thou hast done on our earth; teach us to discern them without us and within.

For Thou leadest Thy Church by the light of Thyself and by Thy Saints even as Thou didst lead Thine ancient Israel, and showest Thyself to Thy holy ones as Thou didst of old time to Moses. We praise Thee for Thy glory revealed in him whom Thou didst send to be the deliverer of Thy people; whom Thou madest eloquent to speak, pa-
Ex. iii, 6; Acts vii, 32. tient to serve, wise to rule. Teach us fear-
Num. xx, 12. lessly to behold Thee terrifying, rebuking,
Deut. xxxii, 49, 4ff. chastising him; to discern Thee by all Thy
Deut. xxxiv, 5. dealings with him; speaking to him face to face as friend to friend; knowing him by
Ex. xxxiii, 17-23. his name, and with Thy love protecting him from Thy glory; making him bold to inter-
v. 8. cede because he had learned Thee to be merciful and gracious, patient and com-
Ex. xxxiv, 2, 5. passionate and true; making Thyself known to him in the hidden vision of the mount;
v. 4.
Ex. xxxiv, 30. so crowning him with Thine own glory that Israel could not look upon his brightness.

v. 6, 7. By signs and miracles also Thou didst

show Thyself to Thy people, in severity and mercy, in fire and cloud; appealing to their senses when their hearts were dull; working for them great deliverances; leading them by patriarchs, judges, kings; warning them by prophets; chastening them through enemies; sending at last Thy Son, by Whom Thou showest Thy ways and Thy wills from generation to generation. v. 7.

And still Thou movest among the nations of earth, making a way for Thyself that Thy love may be able to conquer; doing mercies and executing judgment that Angels and men may understand the glory of service; moving silently upon the waves, swaying the tides of thought by subtle influences, secretly guiding the currents of opinion, ruling the destinies of the nations with an unseen hand. v. 6, 7.

For man is Thine in life and death; Thou sowest and reapest him; as the hayfields of a summer, so are the peoples of earth in Thine eternity. vv. 14, 15, 16.

O God, we too may pass and perish as the dead ancient races. Our cities, as the lost cities of old, may be silent in death; their place may become desolate, their very site unknown. On our foundations other civilizations may arise, and young nations be born who know us not by name.

And as it may be with the nations so must it be with each one of us. A wind shall pass over us and we shall be gone; as a flower in the hay that is cut down and carried, so shall we disappear, and our v. 16.

place shall know us no more. In our houses others shall eat and drink and make merry; in the room where our eyes were closed in death others shall rejoice that a man is born into the world. In our accustomed place in the church another shall praise Thee; at the table our vacant chair shall straightway be filled. Others shall tread the roads that we have trodden and shall make our haunts their own; the life of the city where we have dwelt shall not pause, save where for a moment our funeral procession blocks the way. The grave shall close over us and we shall be gone; and though for a little space the lamp burn in the heart of those who have loved us, soon it will flicker out, for they too shall die, and our very name will be forgotten.

vv. 13, 17, 18. O Father of mercies, strike us with filial fear, that Thou mayest be able to have com-
v. 9, 10. passion on our misery. Our times are in
v. 11, 12. Thy hand; be not angry for ever. Deal not with us after our iniquities, nor reward
v. 14. us after our deserving; for Thou knowest our frame, Thou rememberest that we are
v. 10. but dust. Strengthen Thy mercy over us as the vault of heaven encompasseth the
v. 11. earth; set trackless space between our sins
v. 17, 18. and us; let Jesus Christ, Thy very Mercy and Justice, be with us from eternity to eternity, breathing life into us, commuting the sentence of death by the covenant of love.

So death shall become life; and life shall be made glorious in service and fruitful by intercession through the Communion

of Saints; for Thy people shall keep Thy covenant even from generation to generation, and Thou shalt rule over all. v. 20.

Point 3. The perfection of the soul that is restored and justified must resemble the threefold perfection of the Angels.

The Angelic being is perfect because it is an undivided and unceasing oblation. The angels are 'His,' 'His hosts,' 'His ministers,' having no cause for their being but His glory.

The Angelic will is perfect because it is in entire accord with the Divine Will. The angels 'do His will,' they 'execute His word'; the simplicity of their obedience is their inspiration in ministry, their glory in warfare.

The Angelic life is perfect because it is contemplation in action, action in contemplation; they 'hearken' while they 'execute,' therefore they are 'mighty in strength.'

Through the regenerating processes of grace, by painful conflict and the way of the Cross, man rises to angelic heights of service, and as he attains he realises with increasing fulness the glory of his vocation. For though because of his earthly estate and fallen nature he calls on the hosts of heaven and all creation to glorify God with the praise that as yet he cannot fully utter, he turns back again upon his own soul with a deeper satisfaction and consolation than aught else can offer, saying with his last breath, 'Benedic, anima mea, Domino.'

For he who in his mortality and misery is made 'a little lower than the angels,' knows himself to be in his human nature 'a little less than divine'—'paulo minus a
Heb. i, 4. Deo'[1]—because in Jesus Christ he inherits
Heb. ii, 16. a name more excellent than the Angels; for the uncreated Word 'took not hold of the Angels, but of the seed of Abraham'; He
John i, 14. 'was made flesh and dwelt among us.'

Dan. vii, 10. O God, Whose throne is prepared in heaven, where thousands of thousands minister to Thee, Whose kingdom ruleth over Angels and men and all creation; Who teachest us, children of earth, in ways incomparable, and through varied mediums enlightenest us; reveal Thyself to us through Thine Angels. Give us eyes to behold Thy glory in their perfections; grant us humility to imitate them in their service.

By them we see Thee doing mercies and executing judgments through the long
Gen. iii, 24. course of human history; in mercy guarding fallen man from the life that his sin
Gen. xviii. had turned to bitterness; blessing Abra-
Gen. xvi, 7 ff; xxi, 17. ham and consoling Agar; tenderly draw-
Gen. xix, 16, 17. ing Lot from the corruption that should
Ex. xii, 23. beget death; smiting the foes of Thine
Dan. vi, 22. afflicted people; working deliverance for
Acts v, 19. Daniel and the holy children; opening
Acts xii, . the doors of the apostles' prison and loosing Peter's chains; above all, ministering to the Son of man in His human needs.

Zach. i, 7. By angelic vision Thy prophets were

[1] Ps. viii, 5. vers. Heb. Hieron.

illumined; with Daniel and John angels communed in mysterious intercourse; angels bore the soul of Lazarus into the place of peace; at the final judgment they shall execute justice in heaven and earth. Thou sendest forth Michael to war and conquer, to preserve holy the body of Thine ancient saint, to gladden the Church with the glory of his appearing.[1] Through Thy word Gabriel informs Daniel, gives joy to Zachary, and delivers to Mary the supreme message; Thou givest Raphael for a guide to the traveller, for a protector from dangers. Thou makest Thine Angels unto us mighty guardians and powerful intercessors; before Thy throne they offer up the petitions of the sons of men.

Dan. viii. Apoc. x. Luke xvi, 22. Matt. xxiv, 31. Apoc. xi. Apoc. xii, 7 ff. Jude i, 9. Luke i, 11. Tob. v. 5 ff. Dan. x, 13; xii, 1. Zach. i, 12. Tob. xii, 12. Apoc. viii, 3, 4.

O God, show us the secret of their power; let not their might and glory deceive us, lest we rob Thee of Thine honour. v. 21.

Thine they are, mighty in obedience, glorious in humility. From the vision of Thy Beauty they fly swiftly to do Thy Will; because they inhabit heaven, they despise not earth.[2] On the strong pinions of love they are borne; only where Thou sendest them they go; only what Thou givest them to speak, that they utter.

They rejoice over the sinner that does penance, because they behold Thy Face; they are swift to carry the fiery message of Luke xv, 7. Is. vi, 2 ff.

[1] The Church records two apparitions of St Michael, the dates of which are placed in 493 and 706 A.D. respectively.

[2] "They inhabit heaven, yet despise not earth."—Saint Bernard.

Thy cleansing love, because they ever contemplate Thee, 'covering their feet before Thee for the quenching and subduing of their wills unto Thee; and their faces that they may understand nought but Thee; and with two wings soaring in the hope of Thee.' [1]

Job. xxxviii, 7. John i, 12. O God, we, as the Angels, are called the sons of God; make us in our measure like to them. Give to us the angelical virtues: humility that we may obey Thee; charity that we may love Thee; chastity that we may behold Thee.

v. 21, 22. Make us fervent in worship, faithful in ministry. Grant us to speak Thy word only and not the things of our pride; make us watchful to warn, fearless to rebuke, Jude i, 9. patient and compassionate, reproving evil v. 2. in Thy Name alone. Make us mindful of Thy commandments, because we forget not v. 15-18. Thy benefits. So shall we accept of death as a homage due to Thee, and shall know that Thy mercy and Thy justice are over us from generation to generation; and we, sons of God, shall be made like unto Thee our God, Who, being found a little lower than the Angels, art crowned with glory and worship. Apoc. vii, 9, 11. Then, with all the Angels round about Thy throne and with the great multitude of the redeemed, we shall stand before Thee; and, inspired by Angels and taught by Saints, we shall love increasingly,[2] and shall say

[1] Saint John of the Cross.

[2] The more angels inspire me, the more men teach me, the more do I love.—Saint John of the Cross.

within ourselves in the fulness of our perfected humanity, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless His holy Name." v. 1, 22.

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Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto: Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

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